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ON TOP OF THE UNDERWORLD



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THE AUTHOR, EX-DIVISIONAL DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR LUNCH

[Frontispiece

ON TOP OF THE UNDERWORLD

THE PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF
EX-DIVISIONAL DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR
CHARLES E. LEACH

Late of New Scotland Yard

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ON TOP OF THE UNDERWORLD

INTRODUCTORY.

CRIME, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

EVE set the fashion; it was only an apple she stole, but what a train of events she set in motion!

Throughout the ages, crime has pursued the uneven tenor of its way, and only too often it has been a case of "*cherchez la femme.*"

From its probationary period in the hands of what may be termed amateurs, crime has assumed an ever-growing importance through the centuries until it has reached, in our era, the status of a highly-organised profession, with thousands of people directly or indirectly dependent on it for a living.

Seriously, I often wonder whether the average citizen gives a moment's thought to the tremendous rôle played by crime in the life of the community to-day. For it has a distinct commercial aspect which has to be considered.

To instance my contention, take the enormous amount of money which a lengthy session at the Central Criminal Courts puts into the pockets of widely-differing classes of Society.

Learned Counsel, with their fees and "refreshers," account for some of this, but what of the influx of trade which accrues to restaurants, eating-houses and the like in the immediate vicinity? Court attendants, janitors, police and officials also receive sums which, in the aggregate, reach an enormous total.

Then there are payments to witnesses, expert and otherwise, with the hundred other contingencies inseparable from a *cause célèbre*, or even a very ordinary action.

The swarms of reporters, eager to glean up-to-the-minute news to be flung to the devouring maws of the thundering presses, whence it will issue, red-hot, to be bartered for millions of pennies; these provide perhaps the most potent and spectacular of the commercial aspect of crime.

For centuries past, one of the most baffling of social problems has been that connected with the cause and effect of crime. Short of employing the lethal chamber you will never eradicate the criminal class; and to-day, when the border-line between the actual and the potential criminal has become so very indeterminate, the application of such drastic methods becomes more and more impossible.

Capital punishment, meted out until comparatively recently for quite trivial offences, has signally failed to check the incidence of crime; rather has it had the opposite effect.

With the unprecedented social disturbances following on the Great War an entirely new problem has confronted the authorities. For the battalions of crime, already sufficiently numerous, have been further swollen by the influx of the "new criminal" who, in most cases, is a criminal *malgré lui*—one who is driven into crime against his will by the fatal urge of an economic situation which he does not pretend to understand.

Young and fit, he sees himself up against a brick wall, dealing with a society which apparently has no use for his services, however willing he may be to put them at the disposal of the community.

Of the great army of the unemployed, three classes stand out sharply; first, the professional "dole-drawer," content to exist on what charitable pittance a paternal Government may see fit to allot him, a spineless inert specimen of humanity, impotent alike for good or evil; second,

the rising generation, nurtured either in the difficult years of the War or in those years of transition and instability which immediately followed it; demanding, unlike Class I, not merely "panem" but also a large measure of "circenses"; brought up on the "movies" and the "dogs," and restlessly moving towards the dogs; daily swelling the growing army of the new-style criminal, the "smash-and-grab" artists, the "cat-burglars", the motor-bandits, the confidence-tricksters, the Legion of the Lost who bend to their nefarious uses the latest attainments of Science as fast as the picked brains of the country evolve them; third and last, the War veterans, many still young in years, but old in experience, accustomed to looking on life in the raw, unafraid of battle, murder and sudden death, potentially the most dangerous element of the three; wavering, yet, perhaps, uncertain whether frankly to ally themselves with the forces outside the law, or whether to hang on for still a further period of bitter uncertainty, in the hope that the powers that be may eventually find for them that niche in the ordered scheme of civilisation which their past exploits have so richly deserved.

Scotland Yard does not stand still; its methods are perpetually being re-furbished and brought up to date, up to the minute; it is the old story of the armour-piercing projectile versus the protective armour; and, so far, the projectile, in this case the forces of disorder, almost seems to be keeping just one tiny stage ahead in the race for supremacy.

I look back on my thirty years' service as a detective and at my family record of some 130 years spent in the service of the Police, and I ask myself what really is the cause of crime.

Heredity? To a certain extent, yes. In my early days I spent some time in a particularly "tough" district, that of Hoxton and St. Luke's. "Tough" though this district was, yet, in Pitfield Street, Hoxton, there stood at that time, a famous old school known as the *Haberdashers'*, of which I am proud to have been a pupil.

Little did I think that the schoolboy battles that we frequently had to wage on our way home with the young hooligans who abounded there were but the prelude to the more serious and unremitting strife which I was to carry on in after-life, in that very neighbourhood, as a full-blown detective.

The battle with "Big Sam", which I describe later on, actually took place almost directly opposite my old school.

The old school is now known under another name, and has moved into a more salubrious neighbourhood.

Families of criminals undoubtedly did exist there. Pocket-picking, shoplifting, house-breaking and receiving—such things ran in families. What chance could children brought up in such an environment have?

Environment, too, is largely responsible for sexual crimes.

Professor Cesare Lombroso, the eminent criminologist, set out to accomplish the physiological classification of criminals; he arrived at the conclusion that the criminal is an abnormal being, differing from the normal individual in certain marked physical characteristics in consequence of atavistic tendencies. He strayed, perhaps, occasionally into the realms of the fanciful as, for instance, when he claimed that all left-handed persons have the criminal instinct!

But criminologists may study their pet hobby for all eternity; still, it does not assist Scotland Yard to know that physical characteristics such as big hands and long ears are typical of the criminal classes.

When I was a young man, judges were accustomed to mete out severe sentences, even to first offenders, penal servitude often being their portion. Such a practice can, in my opinion, only result in swelling the ranks of the vicious and embittered type of miscreant, and I am sure that statistics will bear out my contention. All the good work done by the various societies such as the Salvation and Church Armies and the Central Association has been hampered by lack of funds, difficulty of finding suitable employment and, most serious of all, the danger of the ex-convict meeting

again with some of his old associates and being persuaded by them to revert to the broad and easy path.

Since then, of course, the First Offenders and other Acts have resulted in more humane treatment for the first offender and, indeed, all round; this is an immense step forward, but we still have a long way to go.

The question of the "old lag," the hardened professional criminal, is also a difficult one; it must be possible to reform him; but, to have any reasonable chance of so doing, the person who undertakes the task must have great personal influence over the subject and the means of starting him fairly in some honest employment which there is at least a reasonable prospect of his following.

The Prevention of Crimes Act, which became operative in 1909, was framed to deal mainly with the problem of the habitual offender and his eventual reformation. To this end the system of Preventive Detection has been devised. This operates as follows: where an offender has been convicted and sentenced to a term of penal servitude, the jury may proceed to find that he is an "habitual criminal", on evidence which satisfies them that, since reaching the age of sixteen, he has undergone three previous convictions and is persistently leading a criminal life. When this is proved to the satisfaction of the Court, it may order the prisoner, in addition to the term of penal servitude, and after its expiration, a further period of imprisonment for not less than five years or more than ten years, as the Court may determine. This added period is called Preventive Detention, and those undergoing it are subject to such disciplinary and reformatory influence and employed on such tasks as are best fitted to make them able and willing to earn an honest livelihood on their discharge.

Such prisoners are divided into three grades, ordinary, special and disciplinary. Good conduct means promotion from the ordinary to the special grade, bad conduct degradation to the disciplinary grade. The special grade carries, of course, certain privileges.

Under this system, the habitual criminal is kept in confinement for a long period, but under conditions widely differing from those of penal servitude, conditions which fit him to become again a respectable citizen after his release, with a far better prospect of doing so than were he to revert direct from penal servitude to ordinary life.

The corresponding treatment for the young criminal is of course the Borstal system, created in 1908. The operation of this system is sufficiently well known to need little explanation here; generally it is based largely on the "public school" spirit and relies for its effect for good to a great extent on putting the youths on their honour. A Borstal Association has been set up by the Prison Commissioners, who act as the guardians of boys and girls on their release from these institutions.

Controversy has been rife for some time past regarding this system, but I give it as my considered opinion that it has proved itself a success and has been the means of saving many potential young criminals from reverting to crime, and has influenced and helped them to become normal and useful citizens.

I am not the least concerned about the methods which may be adopted in other countries to combat and check crime. *Autres pays, autres mœurs*. We have quite enough to tackle in this country, without bothering our heads too much as to what is going on across the water. This does not mean to say that I am short-sighted enough to blink the fact that we may, from time to time, have much to learn from our neighbours, just as, I hope, they may occasionally find it useful—and they do—to take a tip from the "Yard". What I do mean is that, generally speaking, each country should tackle the problem of crime and its repression within its own frontiers as a separate entity.

I suggest that, even in face of what I have had to say earlier on about the new, dangerous and desperate element which is so rapidly swelling the ranks of crime, the time has not yet come in this country to arm the police. In saying

this, I am quite prepared for serious criticism. Yet, surely, if we study the effect of arming the police in other countries, we must see that this has tended rather to increase crimes of violence than to diminish them. Look at Chicago. If you arm your police, you give your criminal cause to arm himself. What is the result? An orgy of indiscriminate shooting on both sides, the chief sufferers being the innocent passers-by.

The best weapon, to my mind, against crimes of violence lies, not in long terms of penal servitude, but in those two pet aversions of the criminal—maximum sentences of hard labour and the “cat”. Your habitual criminal fears hard work and physical pain more than anything else. Penal servitude is more or less of a joke to the “old lag”. Release from prison is in the nature of a holiday vacation and, after a short spell of enjoyment, they revert to crime with the object of replenishing the exchequer.

Preventive Detention is excellent; too much nonsense has been written and spoken regarding the so-called handicap caused by the necessity for ex-convicts under supervision to report regularly to the police; this is said to prevent the men going straight, and it is thought that they are often unnecessarily harassed by the police. I wager that no police officer has ever done anything to prevent a man who really wishes and tries to rehabilitate himself from doing so. On the contrary, the mere knowledge that his licence is in danger is the biggest incentive to the ex-convict to keep straight.

Armed criminals should be treated with the utmost severity. Long sentences of hard labour and floggings form the best deterrent.

Too much care cannot be exercised in dealing with the first offender. If compatible with justice, he should always be given the chance legislated for in the First Offenders Act. In the majority of cases this saves him from becoming an habitual criminal. Force of circumstances has often led him to commit his first crime, and the mere shock of arrest

with its consequent publicity, together with a week's remand in prison, should be sufficient to deter him from further lapses, provided he is given the chance to reform.

You cannot fight criminals, on the other hand, with kid gloves. In my young days in the Hoxton district and in the East End the detective who was most feared was the local detective, with his knowledge of the criminals who frequented those parts, and one who was ready to give a blow as well as take one. One could not stand too much on ceremony in effecting arrests in those parts; it was a case of acting, and acting quickly.

My advice, then, to the public is to avoid excessive criticism and the setting-up of numerous commissions to enquire into the functioning of what is admitted to be the finest police force in the world to-day. We are none of us perfect, though we are continually striving after perfection; mistakes will be made, but, after all, it is chiefly by these that we learn. Do not undermine the confidence of the police by too much adverse criticism; they have an exceedingly difficult task to perform; and, in the main, they carry it out with tact, tolerance and efficiency.

Every time that the Force is made to pose in any way as the butt for public criticism, it is the criminal who smiles, watching hopefully for any results in the shape of a lessening of the powers of the police, of which they will be only too quick to take advantage.

We live in an age of specialists. In my opinion—and I am forced by my very considerable experience of expert criminals and their ways, to this conclusion—the time has now come when the specialist in criminal detection should be even more encouraged than he has been up to date.

For one of the detective's greatest assets is his knowledge of criminals and their methods of working. As I shall have occasion to show later on, criminals are frequently brought to book through the fact that the police are intimately acquainted with their idiosyncracies and individual methods of working.

In conclusion, therefore, I would merely say: to the public "Remember that a contented and efficient Force, secure in the knowledge that they enjoy your trust and confidence, forms the strongest bulwark between a well-ordered Society and Anarchy." To my old friends and colleagues in the Service "Don't harbour 'grouses'; it's your 'lot', even if not always a very 'happy one'; but, after all, you wouldn't change it for another, now, would you?"

So I say *au revoir* to my old comrades of the C.I.D. I am still "on the trail", like you, and my thoughts hark back to the long weary days and nights of "obbo" (observation) and shadowing, and I share with you the joy and deep satisfaction of the successful climax, when you have caught your birds.

And, as you will see if you have patience to read to the last chapter in this book, I myself, on retirement from the official Force, could not refrain from enrolling myself in the ranks of its unofficial counterpart.

CHAPTER I

"BORN TO THE BLUE"—A FAMILY RECORD—MY FIRST "JOB"—A DETECTIVE AT TWELVE—"BIG SAM"—I JOIN THE FORCE—EARLY DAYS.

OF certain fortunate individuals who have played a leading rôle on Life's stage, it has been said that they were "born to the purple".

Be that as it may, I think that I am entitled to claim that I was born "to the blue"—a humbler walk of life than that of those who dwell in marbled halls, but one which affords him who treads it an insight into human nature and an experience of the world which could hardly be obtained in any other profession.

Members of my family have been officers of the "Force" for upwards of 130 years, probably a record, and this period of service should connote a certain familiarity with and aptitude for the task of safeguarding the interests of the citizen.

My father, ex-Superintendent Alfred Leach, now of course in retirement, was an officer who was connected with many of the big cases which occurred in the early years of this century, such as the Yarmouth Beach Murder for which he arrested Bennett, and his name is still prominent as one of those who collaborated in what might be termed the re-organisation of the "Yard" on lines calculated to meet and fight the new inventions with which civilisation has furnished criminals, as well as other sections of the community.

As a matter of fact, I may be said to have had my first training as a detective at the tender age of twelve, for my father, who was then Local Inspector (the rank corresponding to Divisional Detective-Inspector to-day) in the

Criminal Investigation Department at King's Cross, often made use of my services in following men in whom he was "interested".

Those were sometimes hard days for me, for my father would often, through pressure of work, forget my needs in the commissariat and financial departments, and I would consequently be left to pace the streets of some such neighbourhood as Clerkenwell, from early morning until close on midnight, with neither food nor the wherewithal to purchase it.

My first "job" took me to a restaurant where criminals used to congregate and where I had to deliver a message to the owner. When I entered the shop, with an air of innocence which certainly was not assumed, I found it crowded with big burly men, who seemed content to lounge about and scowl on all who entered.

In the presence of them all I faithfully delivered my written message; the proprietor grabbed me by the shoulder, took me down into the cellar and hissed in my ear "If I was your father, I'd skin you alive". As he was holding a large knife in his hand at the time, you can well imagine the creepy feeling that ran up my spine.

My next job was in connection with the famous silver ingot robbery which caused such a sensation years ago. I, with another boy, was deputed to watch a certain shop in Clerkenwell which one of the principals was expected to visit. It was an extremely rough neighbourhood, and no detective could have remained there for five minutes without being discovered. Therefore we boys were put on the job. It was a bitterly cold day and we were put on to watch early in the morning and forgotten. No money left to buy food and, to make matters worse, some local hooligans quarrelled with us, and we had a free fight, on empty stomachs. You can imagine my relief, late that evening, to see my father and his men arrive on the scene and release us for a welcome meal.

Some time later with the same boy, who was also the son of a detective, I was deputed to follow the manager of a big

tea firm in the City, who was suspected of stealing from the warehouse. This man used to carry a large black bag which I remember opening one evening in a tunnel, for we were travelling by train with him; I took out a handful of the stolen tea as a proof of what he was doing. We watched this man for some two or three weeks, and found that he had no less than three wives and families! At each house he would have stolen tea delivered, as well as taking quantities there himself, and this the wives would sell cheaply in their respective neighbourhoods, so keeping the three establishments going. It is interesting to record that it was only after this man's arrest that the three wives learnt of one another's existence.

Well, all this was good training, and I soon learnt discretion.

Before passing on to a later stage in my career, I should like to make a slight digression, which is interesting in itself and also in proving that dreams sometimes come true.

One evening I was sitting on a high stool in my father's office, poring over a large photograph album which contained the portraits of a number of gentlemen particularly well-known to the police.

There was one face which always exercised a peculiar fascination over me; the brutal expression, the low forehead, the fierce, staring eyes, and the heavy jowl combined to form a terrifying whole which held me spellbound.

My father, seeing my preoccupation, explained that the portrait was one of "Big Sam", a desperate criminal who had once thrown a policeman off a roof when tackled by him.

Needless to say, my dreams that night were haunted by the unforgettable face of "Big Sam". I dreamt that I had caught him breaking into a jeweller's shop, that, when I had disturbed him in the act, he had caught me by the throat and was throttling the life out of me—then I woke, with my hands at my throat, to find it was but a dream.

Fourteen or fifteen years later, as a young Detective-

Sergeant attached to the City Road Station, I had been out from early morning until a late hour, engaged with other officers in rounding up two gangs of thieves in the Hoxton district—the home of “rough houses” in those days—and, after seeing the prisoners we had made safely locked up for the night, had started off again, wondering what the night’s round would bring.

Information had reached us to the effect that a particularly clever gang of jewel thieves were operating in the neighbourhood. Their favourite method of working was to cut the bolts off jewellers’ shops and force the iron shutters. The bolts were cut through bit by bit, and the cuts filled with sawdust and sealing-wax, if it proved impossible to finish the job in one night.

After the bolts had been cut and the shutters forced, a “treacle plaster” (a sheet of paper thickly spread with treacle) would be applied to the window, to deaden the sound of broken glass, and the contents of the window and show-cases would be removed at leisure.

It was known that this particular gang had been making plans for some time to break into a jeweller’s shop in Pitfield Street, Hoxton. One of the gang had actually called at the shop just before closing time and made a small purchase, with a view to getting an idea of the lie of the land.

The gang, who were all desperate men, were known to outnumber us more than two to one, and reputed to carry firearms, but we decided to take our chance, also adopting the somewhat rare precaution of pocketing our truncheons. The C.I.D. truncheon, though shorter than that of the uniformed policeman, is a handy weapon, made of teak, and a nasty thing for the most hardened occiput to encounter.

We entered the shop about 9 p.m. With Detective-Sergeant Laing and another officer I took up position at the window on the first floor, while Detective-Sergeants Wright and Hodson and another officer remained in the back kitchen, as it was thought that the thieves might cut their way

through the wall from next door, where there was an empty shop.

We knew that the favourite time for thieves to operate was between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., owing to the changes of duty of police officers; after 2 a.m. was even more favourable; for, by that time, in the opinion of the average burglar, any respectable C.I.D. man ought to be in bed and asleep.

We had a long wait, and took it in turns to keep watch. Midnight came and passed, then one o'clock; still no sign of the intruders.

Finally, at about 2.30 a.m., a burly figure sauntered along the street; he was quickly joined by two others; they passed on, but returned shortly, with more reinforcements. Dead silence for a time, and then a sudden crash and the smashing of glass warned us that they had effected an entrance.

We rushed to secure them, but they had heard us, and fled. "Look out," cried one of my colleagues, as we dashed out of the shop after them, "they've got guns." But we could not afford to be squeamish. I singled out the burly figure who had been the first to pass along the street, and managed to overtake him before long.

It was none other than "Big Sam".

As I closed on him he threw away some jewellery, and then turned and grappled with me. I tried all my favourite wrestling tricks, but I might have been struggling with a bear. Twisting from my grip, he seized me by the throat, and we fell to the ground. Try as I would, I could not free myself from that terrible grip. Alas, it was no dream this time! I was fast losing consciousness when I suddenly felt his grip relax and heard a colleague anxiously enquiring "Are you all right, Charley?"

When I pulled myself together I noticed that my colleague had a poker in his hand, and that all the fight had been knocked out of "Big Sam", who was lying senseless on the ground. The other members of the gang were duly rounded up, and thus ended a thrilling night's adventure.

But, even now, there are times when I wake at night with the awful feeling of "Big Sam's" fingers round my throat, choking the life out of me. . . .

So much for dreams and their meanings!

It was a near escape, but far from being the only one I have had during my time in the C.I.D., and I have only mentioned it thus early in my reminiscences in view of the close connection it had with the very beginning of my career.

All this early training with my father had naturally heightened an innate taste for police work, and, in 1901, I took the plunge and blossomed out as a uniformed constable attached to the then "A" Division, all the members of which were over six feet in height.

After a short time at King Street, I was transferred to Rochester Row, a station which covered the nest of criminal activity which was then centred round Strutton Ground, Great Peter Street and Tufton Street.

Curiously enough, my office to-day lies within a stone's throw of that neighbourhood, but I note that its glories—from the criminal's point of view, at least, have departed.

At the time I speak of, the police always went abroad in double patrols in certain parts of Westminster, and I had many narrow escapes, especially when I suffered a wrist wound from a knife-thrust intended for a more vital spot in a street brawl in Tufton Street, Westminster. I carry the scar on my wrist as a memento to this day.

On another occasion I had a miraculous escape from death during a chase after a burglar. I actually fell from the roof of a public-house that used to stand almost opposite the House of Lords, and was only saved by my fall being broken by the brewer's advertisement hoarding. I can still hear the screams of an old woman who watched me fall. Right then I made up my mind that I was fated to die in bed, and it was a decision that stood me in good stead in many a tight corner later on.

I only served twelve months in uniform before being transferred to plain-clothes duty; my first post took me in my father's footsteps to the Convict Supervision Office.

In this office I gained a great knowledge of and insight into the ways of criminals, because I had to make a weekly visit to Pentonville Prison, which was then a sort of clearing-house, and inspect the convicts due for release from penal servitude, checking their descriptions and explaining to them what they had to do upon their release from the prison.

In this way I acquired a vast knowledge of expert criminals—a knowledge that stood me in good stead later on in my career. It was astonishing to see the difference in the convicts after they had left Pentonville. We had seen them a few days before in convicts' garb, with whiskers and close-cropped hair. A few days later, they turned up at the Yard, dressed in "civvies", shaved, and often well turned-out; different individuals entirely. All of them were going to turn over a new leaf. It was pathetic to hear some of their stories, while others caused a smile; in some you could read earnestness of purpose, a determination to take advantage of the chance afforded them to start a new life; in others, well their very tones carried a note of insincerity, and one knew that not many months would elapse before they were "inside" once again.

There was a very grim and dry old warder at Pentonville who generally used to attend on us when we visited the convicts. I remember, on his being asked one day "Anyone for the rope inside?" (meaning, was there anyone under sentence of death?), his replying "Yes, a miserable devil, he's complaining about everything, food and so on. Nothing can please him. I shan't be sorry when he's gone."

There was a convict whom I remember well, a little fellow with silver-grey hair and merry, twinkling eyes, who looked like an actor; he had been sentenced many years before to a long term of penal servitude, and always committed some small theft on his release from prison, thus

promptly returning there and having his license revoked time after time. Tommy was a great favourite with the prison staff from the Governor downwards. The old chap really enjoyed being in prison. On one occasion, when he was "going out", the Governor gave him an old overcoat to wear. But he had not taken the difference in their height into account. Tommy left the prison in high glee, with the skirts of the Governor's coat sweeping the ground. He had barely covered a quarter of a mile when his triumphal progress, interspersed with repeated trips over the tails of the coat, was interrupted by an uniformed constable who, noticing the misfit, came to the conclusion that the coat did not belong to its then wearer. "Where did you get that overcoat from?" he demanded. "Eh?" said Tommy. "You heard what I said, where did you get that overcoat you are wearing?" "Oh, that," said Tommy, "from an old friend." "And who's your old friend?" continued the limb of the law. "Why, the Governor of the prison," replied Tommy. This was too much for the officer, who started to march the little man off to the station; but Tommy insisted on his right to the coat, and the result was an interview with the Governor, who simply roared with laughter, a joke in which Tommy joined heartily, much to the discomfiture of the over-zealous policeman.

Whilst at the Convict Supervision Office it was my duty, at times, to show visitors round the famous Black Museum and explain the stories connected with the various grim exhibits.

One of the latter was a bootlace with which Bennett, the murderer, strangled his wife on the beach at Yarmouth. The visitors, particularly those from the U.S.A. and overseas, used to take a keen delight in handling this grim relic, and oftentimes, when we used to look round the Museum at night and check up to see whether everything was in order, the bootlace would be missing. So we simply used to put a fresh one in its place! There must be quite a number of

people abroad who fondly imagine that they possess the famous bootlace. The real one, if I remember right, had disappeared long since.

After being some time at the Convict Supervision Office I was one of the first to do duty in the then newly-formed Finger-Print Department, which had just been inaugurated by Sir Edward Henry. This meant a revolution in the system of identification of criminals. Prior to this, long searches had been necessary, based on descriptions, tattoo marks, scars, the search of prisoners in custody at prisons, and the like. Just imagine searching for plain Smith, Brown or Jones, which names are not uncommon, even among criminals. With the advent of finger-prints all this labour was done away with, and the identity of a criminal could be definitely established in a few minutes. I remember those arduous days, hour after hour spent in classifying old prints on cardboard with a small magnifying glass. No wonder that most of those who did this in the earlier days felt the effects of eye-strain later on.

I look upon the Finger-Print System as one of the greatest aids to the work of the Police ever known.

I may perhaps be permitted to cite an early example of the wonderful manner in which this system worked.

A very daring ladder larceny had been attempted at a house at Cluer, near Windsor, by three of the most expert exponents of this method of burglary, one of whom was on a life ticket for attempted murder.

A "jacob" (ladder) had been "borrowed", conveyed across some fields, and placed against a wall, giving access to a window, while the family were at dinner. Just, however, as the thieves effected their entrance, a maid entered the room and turned up the light. Seeing a man's head coming through the window, she uttered a piercing scream. This had the result not only of giving the alarm to the inmates of the house, but also of alarming the thieves considerably, so much so that the man on top of the ladder fell off it onto his companions below, thus causing a general

mix-up. Nevertheless they were successful in making their escape across the fields.

Now, among the tools the thieves had brought with them was a dock-lantern, and the man carrying this had omitted the precaution of wearing gloves. For, as I have said, the science of finger-prints was yet in its infancy. This lantern was dropped during their flight, found by the police and sent to Scotland Yard.

Upon examination in the finger-print department, one single print was found. My father, who was then in charge of the Convict Supervision Office, soon made up his mind, aided by his extensive knowledge of thieves and their ways, that it might be the finger-print of one of about eight well-known criminals. Among these eight was the man who had been carrying the lantern on the night of the crime. A comparison was made and identification was certain.

It remained to round him and his comrades up, a task which devolved on me, aided by other officers. Our search took us into Redcross Street, Borough, a very "tough" neighbourhood in those days. It would have gone badly with us if the denizens had recognised us. So it was dressed for the part, in rough clothes and "chokers", that we kept our weary vigil. So well disguised were we that, on more than one occasion, we were pulled up and questioned by uniformed constables.

So matters went on for a week, and then we spotted one of the gang, whom we followed to a public-house in Hoxton. In the bar were the two other members of the gang! They were regaling themselves on beer and sandwiches, while they studied an A.B.C., intent on working out their means of transport to their next "job".

Having received instructions to arrest all three, we rushed the bar and, after a short, sharp struggle, captured them. All three were convicted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

It was one of the early triumphs of the finger-print system.

Such, then, was my introduction to the C.I.D., one that was, as the French would say, *assez mouvementée*.

To give the public some idea of the arduous tasks set the department which, to the pride and satisfaction of all Britishers, serves as a model to the police forces of the world, I shall, in my next chapter, try to touch on a few of the problems which confront a detective every working day—and that means practically from one year's end to another.

CHAPTER II

THE C.I.D.—A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DETECTIVE.

You wish to know something about the working of the "Yard" the organisation which is the synonym for efficiency the world over.

I cannot, obviously, take you too far behind the scenes, but I will try to give you some general idea of the thousand and one problems which beset the waking hours of a Divisional Detective-Inspector and too many of those which should be devoted to sleep.

Let me take a day typical of a hundred others during my service with the C.I.D.

Though it was long past midnight when I finally got home last night, after a weary day of patient investigation into a big case which had been baffling us for weeks, I have already been sitting here at my desk for well over an hour, and most of you are not yet ready to discuss your matutinal bacon and eggs. Ever since I came in the telephone has been ringing, and the pile of reports on my desk grows visibly as the very minutes pass. And do not think that I came straight from home to my office.

My district comprises twelve stations, extending from Kennington to Banstead, including Purley, Epsom, Wallington, Earlsfield, Mitcham, Streatham, Clapham and Brixton. In populous residential districts like these one of my constant worries is how to combat the burglar and the house-breaker.

Fortunately I have splendid lieutenants in Detective-Inspectors Barker and Worth. Detective-Sergeants Edwards, Lynch, Miller, Hearn, Haines and others formed one of the finest teams of officers I ever had the pleasure of handling.

One instance of tenacity which I must mention illustrates the long hours and constant strain endured by detectives of which the public little dream. This occurred in a case where Edwards was constantly on duty for a period of nearly fifty hours.

An intricate case of conspiracy was being dealt with, and we had already been engaged on this for a whole night and day, searching houses and other premises, and tracing stolen property in the most outlandish places. Then came the long and arduous task of assembling statements and compiling a lengthy detailed report, which had to be ready in the morning for my chief and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I left Edwards in the early hours of the morning, still hard at work on the typewriter. A little later on he practically collapsed through fatigue and strain but, refusing to give in, stuck to his task until I was able to return, about 9 a.m.

This is just an example of the grit and tenacity which a detective is often called upon to show.

To resume my narrative, no sooner do I succeed in cleaning up one area than there is a recrudescence of criminal activity in another. It is a Division which leaves one little time for sleep.

For some days past my attention has been focused on a certain flat in the Clapham district which, it is suspected, is the headquarters of a dangerous gang of house-breakers, and I have decided to take the earliest possible opportunity of raiding this place at a time when I know that the whole gang will be present.

Overnight I set my usual watch on the flat, and it was early this morning, barely a couple of hours after I had turned in, that one of my faithful lieutenants reported that our birds were in their nest.

Hastily jumping out of bed and dressing, I telephoned for my car and was quickly on the scene of action.

Just as I arrived a desperate struggle was in progress between two of my men and a member of the gang whom

they had seized as he was leaving the house for an early morning stroll. With him was a big Alsatian dog; this powerful brute joined in the attack on my officers, and I arrived just in time to take part in the fray. We soon secured our man who, seeing that the dog was about to receive a shrewd blow on the head from a truncheon, decided that it would be wiser to call him off, and then the strange sight was witnessed of not only the man, but the dog also being marched off under custody. Arrived at the station, it was a simple matter to deal with the man, but to dispose of the dog caused a certain amount of difficulty, for it refused for a long time to be parted from its master, for whom it evidently entertained a great affection; in fact, eventually, the good services of the housebreaker himself had to be enlisted to pacify the animal and induce it to enter a kennel.

Meanwhile we raided the flat, and it certainly was a case of the early bird catching the worm; we found enough stolen property of all descriptions completely to fill a room at the station. This gang was known to us as the "Eider-down Mob", because at nearly every house into which they broke in the neighbourhood of Purley they tied their booty up in an eiderdown, and we had a lovely sample range of parti-coloured eiderdowns on view subsequently at the station.

In the house we caught another member of the gang, who was on the point of disappearing out of a back window. For days afterwards there was a procession of residents from Purley and neighbourhood to identify their eiderdowns and the articles they had contained.

After this early morning "eye-opener" it was time for me to repair to my office, where you now see me.

For a full hour and a half I have been engaged in going through numerous telegrams and reports dealing with the activities of my subordinates in outlying parts of my districts, and in giving directions concerning the many cases they have in hand.

I look at my list of appointments scribbled in my diary, and find I am due at an inquest, at two police-courts and that I also have a case for hearing at the Central Criminal Court, fixed for the afternoon. The next twenty minutes are spent in telephoning to my various stations, issuing hurried directions to the various officers there as to the manner in which they shall carry out the different investigations they have in hand.

I then jump into my car *en route* for the coroner's Court. It is a sordid case of a young girl and a faithless lover, who deserted her in her trouble. A child has been born and has been hidden away. . . . It is soon over; a few minutes suffice for a merciful verdict to relieve the girl from the haunting fear of a criminal prosecution and restore to some extent her faith in the future.

Relieved that this little ordeal is over, I once more enter my car and drive away, just in time to reach the South-Western Police Court as counsel unfolds the opening story of an intricate conspiracy case that I have been dealing with. I soon learn that the case will not proceed very far that day, and that my services can be dispensed with. Leaving one of my inspectors in charge, I jump into the car once more, and dash off to another Court, where a case of rather a different nature is in progress, for I have on remand a gang of shopbreakers.

Just as I am leaving Court, one of my officers comes running to me. "You are wanted on the telephone, sir." "Who is there?" It is the officer in charge of one of the outlying stations speaking. "Will you come at once, sir? There is a woman in the station whose husband has threatened to shoot her, and she is afraid to leave for fear he should carry out his threat." I tell the officer to detain the woman pending my arrival, and drive off at once to the scene of action. There, cowering in a chair, is a pale-faced little woman, with terror written all over her face. Piecemeal her story is elicited. An unhappy married life for years past, the husband obviously a self-centred egoist, with violent

tendencies, an ex-Naval man; they live in some out-of-the-way corner on the outskirts of my division; he has threatened her, and is in possession of two revolvers.

The prospect is not too cheerful. Leaving the little woman at the station, off I go to beard the sailor in his den. He resides in a kind of stable, the lower part of which is an immense store-room, windowless and in almost total darkness. Picking our way carefully through the lumber which litters this, suddenly we hear a voice booming directly over us "Who's there?" A light appears, and we see a bearded face peering down at us.

A wooden ladder leads to the upper storey. There is no time to reflect; throwing caution to the winds, my officers and I mount the ladder; as we arrive at the trap-door the man steps back. We step out onto the floor, watching our man's every action. He is unarmed, we see. But we are not taking any chances; we search him, but without result.

A quick search of the premises reveals the presence of two revolvers, two rifles and ammunition. "I suppose my old woman sent you here", says our man, "what's she got the wind up for?"

He is a nasty-looking customer, and I can well imagine that his unfortunate wife had good reason to fear him. He does not possess a licence for the fire-arms, so we take him to the station. There, as so often happens in these cases, the woman declines to make a charge; she seems quite calm and satisfied once she knows that the fire-arms are in our possession. The two parted, I believe, finally at the station, she declaring her firm intention never to return to him again, he maintaining a sullen silence.

On my way back to my headquarters, I have to find time to call in at the Sutton, Mitcham and Streatham stations, where a hurried conference is held with the respective officers in charge.

On finally getting back to my "base", I find that a further accumulation of documents awaits me. Follows some

dictation and routine work which, in spite of the quick-fire methods employed, still occupy some two or three hours.

It is now 6 p.m., and I have not seen or been in touch with my home since dawn broke. I telephone through to enquire after the well-being of my family, and have to inform them, as usual, that the hour of my return is most uncertain.

In fact, just as most of you are collecting your belongings and making a dash for the nearest tube or bus, I am beginning to get really down to it.

A telephone call comes through from a house at Tulse Hill, informing me that burglars have once again attempted to break in. This place interests me particularly, since, twice within the past fortnight, I have received similar messages. There seems to be something unusual in these happenings.

Off I go to the house, where I learn from the wife of the occupier that, soon after dusk had come on, she heard a smash of glass in the back room, leading on to the garden, and, rushing out, found a big hole in one of the panes, and her servant, an Irish girl of some nineteen summers, indulging in a fit of hysterics in the scullery. I interview the girl, who is still in a very excited condition; she keeps on saying "There were three of them". I succeed in calming her somewhat and gradually elicit her story by a series of questions. She tells me that she went out into the garden to put some potato-peelings in the dustbin, when she saw three men rush across the garden and disappear. They had been standing by the back window and ran away at her approach, climbing over a fence at the bottom of the garden.

Asked if she could describe any of the men, a curious thing followed; she looked at me very intently and said, "One of them was very tall", and gave a description which just fitted me! Looking at the girl's hands, I notice that there is dirt under her nails and on the palms. Making a careful examination, I ask her to account for this, and she is unable to do so. I point out to her that, if her story is true,

that she had been peeling potatoes, her hands should surely be fairly clean; she does not answer.

Then I have a look at the window, and see, directly outside, a large piece of crazy paving, which I find has been dislodged from about halfway down the garden path. I make a careful examination with my torch of the path and flower-beds; nowhere can I find any trace of men's feet; what I do find is distinct impressions of a tiny foot.

I look at the girl's shoes, and notice that they are covered with dirt; they fit the impressions to a nicety. The burglars are found!

Needless to say, the householder and his wife, who had already complained bitterly of the inefficiency of the police and were no doubt "all set" to give me another "wiggling", were as surprised as they were relieved. The matter had been preying on the wife's health, and the husband was more than relieved. So he sped me with compliments; in fact, as it was a garden scene, I might add "said it with flowers".

By the time I get back to the station it is about 8.30 p.m., and I find that, in the meanwhile, enquiries have been coming in from all directions; this means another busy half-hour of telephoning. Then my attendance is urgently required at a house near Kennington Oval. We have for some time had our eye on this place, and two very astute officers, Detective-Sergeants Miller and Hearn, have been in charge of the investigations. They have telephoned, asking that I should join them at once, if possible.

When I get down here, I learn that some sacks, thought to contain stolen property, have been taken into the house. This we enter, in company with some other officers, and, sure enough, in one of the back rooms we find three large sacks containing a quantity of pipes, cigarettes and tobacco, evidently the proceeds of a theft from some neighbouring warehouse. Several thefts of this nature have, indeed, been reported of late, and it looks as if we had found the headquarters of the gang responsible for them.

I heard that some men had driven up that afternoon in a taxi with the sacks, but had left again almost at once, probably in search of a "fence" (receiver); it was thought that they might be back at any moment.

I accordingly place my men both inside and outside the house, while I post myself just behind the door of the room where the sacks were found. Time passes, with us on the alert.

Suddenly the door opens. Immediately there is a scene of confusion. Miller, with Charlie Hearn, another of my sergeants, dashes into the passage, quickly followed by others. As I run out from my hiding-place, I collide with a form, and promptly grapple with it.

Locked in a close embrace, we sway to and fro, each striving to hold one another. Both of us put in all we know, and it is a case of "all-in wrestling". All of a sudden, however, my opponent speaks. It is Sergeant Miller!

Fortunately we have identified each other before any very serious damage has been done and, "breaking away", we rush to the help of Sergeant Hearn, who is putting up a plucky fight against odds on the stairs. The three of us soon succeed in overpowering his assailants.

It has been hot work while it lasted, but, in the meantime, the rest of my men have managed to rope in the other members of the gang, and all's well that ends well.

After this strenuous but humorous interlude, which lasted until after midnight, you may imagine that I am more than ready for bed; but it is not to be.

All my day had been taken up, as you will have gathered, by a succession of happenings which have encroached only too far into the time I should have devoted to the daily routine of my office.

In other words, I have to go back to clear up.

I remember that, among other things, a report is urgently needed by the Public Prosecutor, in the morning, on an intricate case of fraud, together with numerous statements which have to be prepared and checked. A further report

has to be delivered, also early in the morning, to my chiefs at the "Yard". Not to mention the mass of normal routine business which has accumulated during the day, sent in from my twelve different stations in this large division, and which simply has to be dealt with.

Just time for a quick "sluice" and, lighting up my pipe, I get really down to it.

Two a.m. has struck when I finally start for home. In other words, I have achieved the apparently impossible—though the normal for a C.I.D. man—I have worked twenty-five hours out of the twenty-four, for it was about 2 a.m. when I left home yesterday, and I still have some way to go!

On arrival home at last, I find yesterday morning's mail; it contains, among other things, the half-yearly demand for rates, a voluminous report about the construction of the little garage I have built in my few spare hours, which apparently does not conform to the regulations, and an imploring appeal, profusely illustrated, from the Yellow Star Line to "spend three carefree weeks cruising in the West Indies".

Well, sufficient for the day. . . .

CHAPTER III

MURDERERS I HAVE KNOWN—SIDNEY HARRY FOX, THE MARGATE MURDERER—BROWNE AND KENNEDY—BONNOT, THE "RED BANDIT"—THE "SWEENEY TODDS"—THE "CUP FINAL" MURDER.

MURDERS will always, I suppose, exercise a certain fascination over the majority of the public, though probably they are rarely, as in the case of many other of the "major" crimes, the result of deep-laid plans and weeks of preparation.

The first case with which I shall deal here will concern a mere youth, who was slowly, but surely driven, by the cumulative force of his lesser crimes, into the frightful end of a matricide. I allude to Sidney Harry Fox, who murdered his mother at Margate, in 1927.

Fox made an early start in crime, for his first committal took place when he was only sixteen years of age. It was but the prelude to years of misdeeds which culminated in the terrible crime which ended his earthly career. I knew Fox at this tender age, and I well remember how anxious he was, when arrested for his first misdemeanour, that his mother should be kept in ignorance of what had happened. Later, he was to show considerably less filial regard for her feelings.

Fox's evil genius was undoubtedly "*auri sacra fames*"; he loved cutting a dash and generally living above his station, and he was not too particular about the means he employed to obtain the sinews of war.

My first encounter with him took place, as I have said, when he was but sixteen years old; he was then employed in the secretary's office of a well-known bank. Forgeries had been taking place, and my services were called on in investi-

gating these. The evidence I was able to obtain pointed in quite unmistakable fashion towards Fox as the author of them.

Accordingly I sent for him and taxed him with them; the good-looking, fresh-faced stripling strenuously denied all knowledge of what had happened; but, on searching his room, I found abundant evidence of his connection with the affair.

"Don't tell my mother!" This was the agonised cry of the youth who was afterwards to murder her. For, at that time, he was still extremely attached to her.

It did not take me long to ascertain that young Fox had been leading a hectic life in the West End of London, where he was in the habit of masquerading as a man of means, taking every opportunity of mixing, in evening dress, with people in a much higher station of life than he could lay claim to. It is sad to relate that his mother had no idea whatever of his double existence, the revelation of which came as a dreadful shock to her.

This early lesson might, one would have thought, have served to convince Fox that honesty was the best policy, but it had exactly the opposite effect. Only two years later, a colleague of mine at the "Yard" was discussing with me a case with which he was dealing, concerning some particularly clever forgeries at a bank. It was a case which immediately aroused my close attention, and I remarked to my colleague that it looked like an "inside job".

Going further into the matter with him, it was not long before I was able to identify Fox as one of the staff at the bank, and this made me practically certain that it was an inside job.

Fox, who was then living with his mother at a very comfortable flat in the Hampstead district, had evolved a very clever system of inserting fictitious accounts in the bank's books, under various names. At week-ends, he would himself cash cheques on these accounts at different country branches of the bank.

When we called at the Hampstead flat, Fox was actually away on one of these little money-making expeditions; his mother did not know where he was or why we wanted him. Two of us kept watch all through the week-end, occasionally snatching a few hours' sleep in an armchair, while the anxious mother hovered in the background. Early on the Monday morning Fox returned, to be caught with the proceeds of bogus cheques on him. His surprise was only equalled by his mother's grief.

Fox was still leading his dual existence of humdrum bank-clerk by day and man-about-town by night, and his further trial and conviction were powerless to stay him on the road to ruin.

I come now to the events which immediately preceded his last fatal step. Having by now lost all chance of securing or retaining honest employment, he was finding it increasingly difficult to keep in funds. Despairing of raising sufficient money to clear him of debt, he conceived a diabolical plan.

He resolved to insure his mother's life for £3,000, to be paid to him, on her death, and to murder her.

This was scarcely his first venture of the kind; for, a short time before, he had persuaded a wealthy woman acquaintance of his to take out a large policy on her own life. Directly this was in force, he further persuaded her to make a will which would ensure him a substantial sum. When taxed with this later, he attempted to justify his action by the plea that the woman owed him a large sum, which could only be paid in this way.

This woman's suspicions were eventually aroused; she destroyed the will and actually had Fox arrested for stealing jewellery and money from her flat, which meant another conviction for him.

It was directly after leaving prison on this occasion that he took out the policy on his mother's life. Together they travelled about the country, always desperately hard-up, staying at various hotels on the South Coast, whence they invariably decamped without paying their bill.

This obviously could not go on for ever, and Fox decided that the time had come to act. The pair arrived at an hotel in Margate on October 16th, 1927, and, as Fox gave a plausible excuse for their lack of luggage, they were given rooms; these were adjoining, with a communicating door.

By means of cashing a worthless cheque, Fox obtained enough money to go to London, where he hoped to raise more. He was exceedingly anxious, in view of his desperate resolution, to keep up the insurance on his mother's life for a little time, but he had only enough money to keep it in force until midnight that same day.

His attempts to raise more money failed, and he returned to Margate a desperate man. He had to act quickly, and the fact that his prospective victim was his mother does not appear to have weighed with him. With the few shillings remaining to him, he went out and bought a bottle of wine, of which his mother partook at that last dreadful meal they shared.

Time was slipping away; the crime must be perpetrated before midnight, or the policy would lapse.

At last Fox persuaded his unsuspecting mother to retire for the night, and the hotel began to quieten down. Shortly before midnight, however, the few persons who were still about heard Fox running downstairs, shouting that his mother's room was on fire. He appeared distraught and on the verge of collapse.

Strangely at variance with his statement that he had entered his mother's room, when awakened by a smell of burning, by the communicating door, was the fact that those who rushed to Mrs. Fox's aid found this door and the door to the passage both closed. The latter was burst open, and one of the visitors entered the room, after placing a handkerchief over his face.

He succeeded in dragging Mrs. Fox, who was lying on the bed, out of the room. Doctors were summoned, but, in spite of all their efforts, there was nothing to be done. Mrs. Fox was dead.

At the inquest held next day, nothing in the way of suspicious circumstances came to light, and a verdict of "Death from Misadventure" was returned, nor was any post-mortem made.

Fox's greed for money was, however, to be his downfall. Making arrangements for the funeral to take place in Norfolk, he called, on his way there, at an insurance office, where he made enquiries as to how long it took to settle claims of this nature.

When the claim was sent in, the insurance company at once instituted searching enquiries, the result of which aroused their suspicions and caused them to communicate with the police. It was not long before further enquiry showed that the theory of death from misadventure was untenable, and Fox was arrested and charged with murder.

What must have happened is that Fox, who had very likely doctored the wine, entered his mother's room by the communicating door, found her in a sound sleep, seized her by the throat, and strangled her, subsequently setting fire to an armchair in the hope that the resulting conflagration would remove all traces of his crime.

Whereas he had had plenty of experience of forgery, he seems to have been an amateur at arson, for he was unaware that the horse-hair stuffing of an armchair is not a good medium for arson; it flares up for a moment, then smoulders away, making only a big cloud of smoke.

A significant fact was that the insurance policy was due to lapse at midnight, in view of Fox's failure to raise even the small sum of money he needed, and that Mrs. Fox's death took place at 11.40 p.m.

Fox, who had protested his innocence all along, qualified the suggestion that he had murdered his mother as "horrible".

Mr. Justice Rowlatt, in his summing-up, said: "The couple were living of course most dishonestly, and in a state of indescribable stress which offered no way out. It is not suggested that Fox showed any hatred towards his mother.

The idea presented to you is that he killed Mrs. Fox—if he did kill her—purely for money. It may be possible, supposing he committed this murder, that in a way he was willing to treat his mother with the greatest possible kindness until he destroyed her. Human nature is a very funny thing.”

On going to the scaffold, Fox is reported to have said: “I ask for no personal sympathy. I never have, no, not even on the occasion when, as a boy of eighteen, I was sent to prison for three months as a first offender.” My readers will recollect that Fox’s first conviction took place at the age of sixteen.

It is difficult to form any conclusion other than that Fox, doubts as to whose sanity were never raised, must have been one of those fortunately rare individuals who are born with a moral kink and pre-destined to end their days in the shadow of the scaffold. His father he had never known; and so this wilful, headstrong youth was left to the loving, but impotent care of the woman whose tender affection he was to repay in such frightful coin.

Frederick Guy Browne who, with William Henry Kennedy, paid the utmost penalty for the callous murder of Police-Constable Gutteridge, was a criminal of altogether a different stamp. In fact, to my mind, the most interesting and baffling feature of this case was the fact that a man like Browne, distinguished at least for physical courage and determination, should choose as accomplice a weakling and craven like Kennedy. For there is little doubt that it was Kennedy who was largely responsible for bringing Browne to the gallows.

For many years before his final crime, I had known Browne as a dangerous motor-bandit and car-stealer, cool and daring to a degree, and utterly desperate when in a tight corner. He was no stranger to penal servitude, having served many sentences, including one of four years for an ingenious series of car insurance frauds. A clever mechanic, he cloaked his nefarious trade by apparently conducting an honest business as a motor dealer and engineer.

After setting this device late at night, Browne left the garage and, early in the morning, rang it up from a distant town. Everything worked according to plan, and the garage was burnt down. It is said that he made a large sum of money out of the insurance companies by this and similar frauds before he was eventually arrested and convicted.

Browne was an unsatisfactory prisoner; he was in continual trouble, and forfeited all his remittance marks. Afterwards he said that he had done this on purpose, so that, on his final release, he would not be under police supervision as a good-conduct man under ticket-of-leave would have been. He wanted to be free to pursue his career of crime without undue hindrance.

During his last term of imprisonment he was also heard to remark that, next time, he did not intend to be taken alive.

In my own district Browne and his gang once committed a particularly audacious burglary, getting away with some £3,000 worth of jewellery. At dead of night entrance was effected into a house, a large Alsatian watch-dog having been caught and drugged. Burglar alarms connected with a safe were put out of action; the safe was then taken out into the garden, opened and the jewellery removed. A small, mother-of-pearl-handled revolver which Browne took from the safe was found on him when we arrested him for the Gutteridge murder.

Browne and his gang committed many other crimes of violence, but I must pass on to the morning of September 27th, 1927, when the dead body of Police-Constable

What actually put us on the right track in the investigation of this murder was what at first appeared to be quite an irrelevant matter. A car had been stolen on the night of the murder—which presumably took place at about 4 a.m.—from a Dr. Lovell, of Billericay, in Essex. It may, of course, be that Gutteridge had recognised this as the stolen car, and had held the murderers up to question them. In support of this theory is the fact that Gutteridge's whistle and pocket-book were found lying beside him, while he had his pencil in his hand.

Later on that day Dr. Lovell's car was found abandoned in a cul-de-sac in the district to which I was then attached as Divisional Detective-Inspector—Brixton. It bore signs of having collided with the grass bank of a road, and an empty cartridge-case was found in it. Now, the car had been abandoned in South London, and Browne had a garage in South London; also the nature of the "job" pointed to his handiwork. Still, at that time, there was not sufficient evidence to connect him with the crime. But where was he?

Fortunately for us, Browne played into our hands by resuming his career of crime as if nothing had happened. News reached us that he was motoring all over the country, engaged on various exploits of a criminal nature. It was in this manner that an unexpected clue came to us from Sheffield. A man had been arrested for reckless driving, had given a false name, but had eventually been identified as Browne; it was further discovered that he had sold in Sheffield a car which he had stolen in my district, and for which Detective-Inspector Barker was then searching. As

a result of these enquiries we traced Browne and Kennedy to a garage in Battersea. It was, in fact, only as a result of the happenings in Sheffield that Kennedy first came into the picture.

Chief-Inspector Berrett, whom I had recently succeeded in the Division, had been placed in charge of the Gutteridge murder enquiries, and the Sheffield clues put him on the track of the men he was working tirelessly to bring to justice.

I had a close watch kept, day and night, on the Battersea garage. A long and tedious vigil ensued.

On the day when the actual arrest was to take place, Browne had motored down to Princetown to meet and convey to London a friend who was being released from the prison that day. Approaching Andover on their way back, they were stopped by a constable, who asked them to give his sergeant a lift into the town. Browne, who had two revolvers in the car, hesitated at first; but, realising that the policeman was quite unsuspecting, agreed; they actually discussed the Gutteridge murder during the short ride.

That evening, I had just returned to my headquarters at Brixton, after an all-day vigil at the garage, when the telephone rang, and Inspector Barker conveyed the dramatic news that Browne had just arrived at the garage. Dashing back in my car, I took charge of Browne, who was being detained pending my arrival.

At that moment my colleagues and I had what I shall always consider a very narrow escape. Browne, in a quiet tone, asked my permission to go to the lavatory a few yards away; to do this he would pass quite close to his car. Knowing I had to deal with a desperate character (had he not said that he would not be taken alive?) I told two fully-armed officers to accompany him. Thus was a tragedy probably averted; for, on searching the car afterwards, we found two revolvers concealed in it. Browne's idea was undoubtedly, as he admitted afterwards, to make a dash

for the car, gain possession of the revolvers and shoot his way to safety.

On searching Browne, we found in his hip-pocket twelve cartridges of the type of those which killed Gutteridge, an extraordinarily clever skeleton key shank, with ten ward fittings for skeleton keys (this was manufactured by him to fit the handle of skeleton keys), two forged motor car licences, and a stockinette mask. A general search of the garage and office revealed some more cartridges, skeleton keys, masks, a flash-lamp, and a number of surgical instruments taken from the car stolen from the doctor and cunningly converted into tools for the garage.

I telephoned Chief-Inspector Berrett, who quickly arrived on the scene; meanwhile further discoveries were made in the garage, more cartridges being found, as well as a quantity of lint and ethyl-chloride. At Browne's house an ear-speculum was found, and also another revolver—the one stolen from the safe at Tooting. Gradually we collected together quite a number of these surgical and medical appliances that had been stolen from the doctor's bag in the car.

Sufficient evidence was now available definitely to connect Browne with the Gutteridge murder; he was therefore invited by Chief-Inspector Berrett, with whom I was, to account for his movements on the night of September 26-27, 1927.

Browne said "Why should I tell you anything?"

He finally volunteered a statement which contained a remarkable number of lies. One thing he said was of vital importance to the prosecution. It was with regard to the Webley revolver which was found fully loaded in his car which he drove into the garage. He said "I have never fired the revolver since I first had it". This was untrue. He also said "I got it some time in April last".

Browne also said that, on the night of the murder, he had been at home with his wife. He indicated very clearly what he would have done with the revolver he had in the

car, if the opportunity had presented itself, for, while detained at Tooting Police Station, he caught sight of the small revolver stolen from the safe at Tooting and found at his house. He said "You've found that, have you? That's no good; it would only tickle you unless it hit you in a vital part. If you had stopped me when I was in the car I would have shot five of you and saved one for myself. From what I can see of it, I shall want a machine-gun for you . . . next time".

It was a scene I shall always remember; as the night went by, Browne's eyes continually roamed from our faces to the collection of revolvers and doctor's instruments laid out on the table in front of him, which provided such damning evidence against him. He must have realised then that the end was in sight. Yet he persisted that he was innocent.

Meanwhile, Kennedy was traced by two of my officers, Detective-Sergeant Miller and Detective Hawkyard, to an address at Wandsworth, where he occupied a furnished room with his wife; but he had disappeared suddenly, shortly after Browne's arrest. Further smart work by Miller traced Kennedy and the woman as having left by the midnight train on January 21st, taking seats in the Liverpool section of the train. It was also ascertained that Kennedy had a revolver in his possession.

Detective-Inspector Kirschner and a Detective-Sergeant, Duncan, from New Scotland Yard, were despatched post-haste to Liverpool and, working in conjunction with the Liverpool police, were soon able to trace Kennedy's address. Officers who were watching the house saw a shadowy figure stealthily crossing the road. Detective-Sergeant Mattinson, of the Liverpool police, pursued the figure, caught it up, and at once recognised Kennedy, whom he knew. "Bill," he said, "I want you." "Stand back," replied Kennedy, "or I'll shoot you," at the same moment pushing an automatic pistol into the officer's ribs.

As a matter of fact, Kennedy did attempt to fire but fortunately for the officer, the safety catch was on. A very curious fact afterwards ascertained was that there was actually a bullet part of the way up the barrel of the automatic.

Kennedy was overpowered and taken to the Bridewell whence he was sent next day to London.

Kennedy was known to be a partner of Browne in his stolen motor car business; he was a convicted criminal, a drunkard and a degenerate. It was his weakness for alcohol that used to cause Browne continual apprehension; he was always frightened that Kennedy, in one of his drunken orgies, would "blow the gaff" and incriminate him. He had, as a matter of fact, threatened to shoot Kennedy if the latter gave way to drink again.

When Kennedy was questioned at the Yard about the shooting of Gutteridge he did, in fact, unlike Browne who had stoutly denied all connection with the affair, make a statement which incriminated both himself and Browne, whom he charged with doing the actual shooting. This statement could not, of course, be taken as direct evidence against Browne; in order definitely to implicate him, it was necessary to deal with the revolver and cartridges. Experts established beyond doubt that the Webley found in Browne's car when he was arrested was the only weapon which could have fired the cartridge of which the empty case was found in the car stolen from the doctor. There was the additional damning fact that cartridges of the same obsolete type were found in the chambers of the revolver. The chain was complete. Kennedy had confessed to having helped to steal the car and to having been in it with Browne when Gutteridge was killed; in that killing, however, he strenuously denied having taken any part.

The trial of Browne and Kennedy took place at the Old Bailey in April, 1928, before Mr. Justice Avory. The crucial question was, as the Judge pointed out in his summing-up, at least where Browne was concerned, "was

he in possession of the revolver exhibited in Court (Exhibit 17) on the night of September 26-27, when Gutteridge was shot?"

The learned Judge said, during his summing-up: "In view of these statements, the statement that he was prepared to shoot down anybody who attempted to stop him in his car, you must judge whether you believe him when he says in that witness-box that he has never fired a revolver in his life, and that he only kept them loaded to prevent them going rusty."

Of Kennedy, His Honour said: "If Kennedy, at the time the police-constable was shot, knew that he was being shot while in the execution of his duty; and if you are of the opinion that Kennedy was acting in consort with Browne in shooting that constable, in order to prevent their arrest or further detention, then he is liable to be found guilty on this indictment."

The jury, consisting of nine men and three women, took two hours and twenty minutes to consider their verdict, which found both prisoners "Guilty". Sentence of death was passed.

In his speech from the dock, Browne said: "The jury have found me guilty, but it will come out later that I had nothing to do with it. I am not going to argue the point. I am not going to try and prove to you that I am innocent". He added that he could not have wished to be tried by a fairer judge.

Kennedy said: "My Lord, I say it in no mere spirit of bravado, but I am not afraid of death. I meet it willingly, because I know—I have certain knowledge—that in the hereafter I will be united for all eternity with the one darling girl who has stuck to me all through this terrible ordeal".

The conviction of Browne and Kennedy was a triumph for the modern science of detection; the microscopical examination of the revolver found in Browne's car and of the empty cartridge-case, together with the identification of the medical gear stolen from Dr. Lovell sealed their fate.

Browne, too, had largely his own overweening vanity and confidence in his ability to throw dust in the eyes of the police to thank for his downfall. There was no need for him to retain possession either of the revolver with which he killed Gutteridge or of the medical gear he had found in the stolen car. Had he not done so, he might never have been brought to justice.

I have said something of what manner of men these ill-assorted partners in crime were. In spite of the revolting crime which brought him to the scaffold, there were traits in the make-up of Frederick Guy Browne which, had they been given full scope, might have brought him to the front in legitimate fields. Of immense physical strength—he used to “jack up” his car by the unaided strength of his formidable muscles—he was a man of undoubted courage; a life-long teetotaller and non-smoker, he was a model father, and devoted to his family; he was an engineer and mechanic of parts, and indeed perfected many useful little inventions which, it must be admitted, he usually put to nefarious uses. His eyes attracted me most. They conveyed the impression that here, while you were talking to him, was a man perpetually on the *qui vive* against some danger which he almost hourly expected.

Beside this clear-cut and dominating figure, the weakling and degenerate Kennedy paled into insignificance. All along he had wished to “squeal”, only being deterred from doing so by sheer physical fear of Browne. During the days which followed the crime, the reports of the investigation published in the newspapers drove him into a pitiable state of nerves, from which he sought refuge in drink. It was then that Browne, finding him drunk in a bar at Clapham one night and regaling the company with his views on the Gutteridge murder, threatened to shoot him if he found him the worse for drink again. While in prison he attempted to commit suicide, writing, in ignorance that all letters were scrutinised by the officials, to a man, asking him to obtain from a relative in Liverpool, a quantity of cyanide

of potassium, which was to be conveyed to him in prison, spread on a sandwich.

Browne, too, wrote a letter from prison, in which, written in invisible ink between the lines of a harmless message, was a request for "the date when I exchanged revolvers with Kennedy after he may have shot the police-constable". This message was deciphered by the authorities.

And so the murderers of Police-Constable Gutteridge went to their doom.

The next murderer with whom I propose to deal was a man whose name was, not so long ago, a household word, as the principal actor in a drama which is only paralleled in the annals of crime by our own Sidney Street affair.

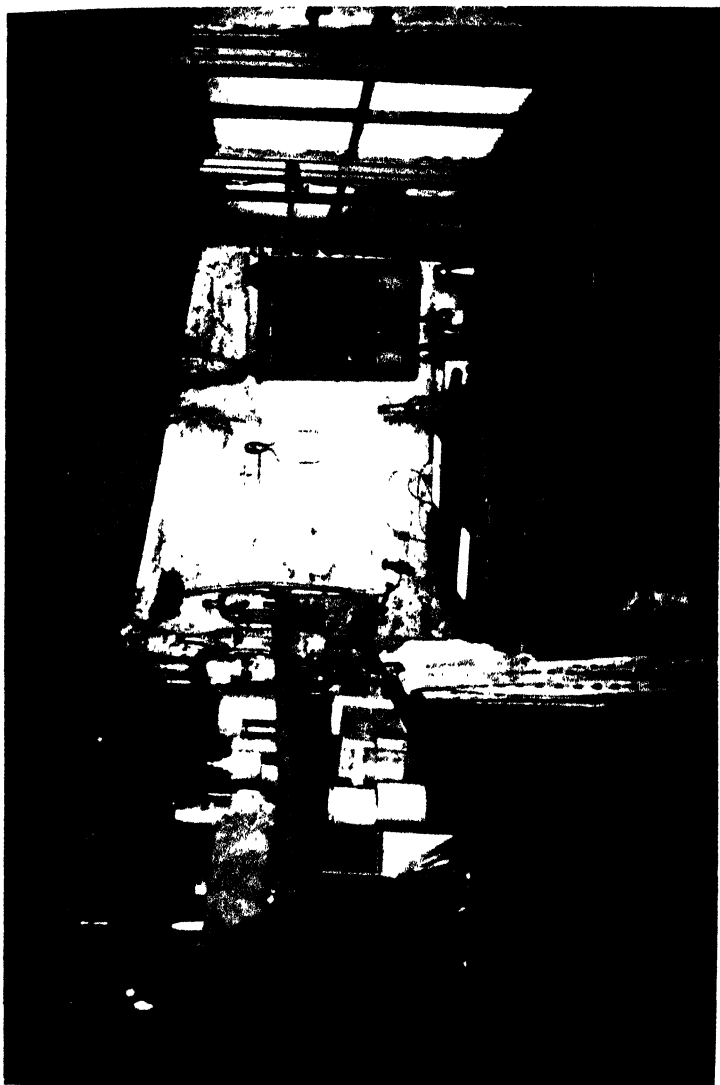
I allude to the Frenchman Bonnot, known as the "Red Bandit", leader of one of the most desperate gangs of motor-bandits ever known; probably, in fact, the originator of the motor-bandit cult.

Before I tell of his spectacular end, I must narrate how I very nearly came into personal contact with him, at an earlier stage of his career, a contact which, had it actually been established, would almost certainly have been fraught with a fatal result for one or the other of us.

Information had reached us that a gang of international coiners and anarchists had established their headquarters near the Hampstead Road.

The "mint" was ostensibly a large-sized workshop, and the proprietor posed as an inventor, thus hoping to distract suspicion from the comings and goings of his gang. Two of these lived hard by, while others were residing at Golders Green; surely a respectable neighbourhood enough.

For tedious days and nights we kept the workshop under close observation; finally one of my colleagues, by posing as a gas-fitter, succeeded in entering the premises, and was able to ascertain the real nature of the "research" which was being carried out there. On raiding the place we found, in fact, a complete "mint". The alleged "inventor" and another member of the gang were arrested, and we found



no less than two dozen moulds which had been used for the manufacture of "snide" five-franc French and Belgian coins.

Later in the same evening we made a raid on the house at Golders Green. When I entered with my colleagues, someone got away very hurriedly through the back entrance and over the wall. Though we closely pursued him, the unknown fugitive made his escape.

I was afterwards informed that he was none other than the notorious Bonnot. Now, the "Red Bandit" was never known to go unarmed, and it is possible that, had I arrived at the house a little earlier and surprised him before he could effect an escape, I might not now be writing this tale—or possibly Paris might have been spared a series of the most brutal and callous murders of modern times.

Bonnot, who, as I said, was probably the first motor-bandit, and his gang were finally run to earth, after a hectic career of crime, during which they butchered literally dozens of people, in a large garage in a suburb of Paris called Choisy-le-Roi. Here they put up a resistance which resulted in a pitched battle which can only be compared to the astounding siege of Sidney Street.

It was actually found necessary to mobilise against them a force consisting of a detachment of gendarmes, two companies of the Garde Républicaine, a body of firemen, and about thirty local residents, all fully armed.

After a desperate resistance, the bandits were overpowered; when the besiegers finally broke into the garage, they found the lifeless body of the "Red Bandit", riddled with bullets.

But the gang were not yet done with. Some of them had taken refuge in an outhouse of the garage, from which post of vantage they redoubled their desperate resistance, so much so that it was found necessary to summon reinforcements, consisting of a regiment of Zouaves, further detachments of gendarmes and of the Garde Républicaine, and about half the available police of Paris.

As a last argument, machine-guns were called in and, when the forces of the law finally effected an entrance, the last of the gang were found dead and dying on the floor.

Before terminating this little disquisition on murderers let me introduce two more Frenchmen, not of the hardened Bonnot or Browne type, but youths who were, as the French themselves would say, at their *premier essai*. These were Pierre Joubberthie and Jean Clancier, whom I arrested on their arrival at Liverpool from Portugal, and subsequently escorted to Calais, where I handed them over to the French police.

The "Sweeny Todds", as they were dubbed, owing to their describing themselves as hairdressers' assistants, had murdered an old Frenchman named Demangeon and his maidservant in a little villa not far from Bordeaux.

It was a particularly brutal crime, for the two victims, both advanced in age, had been done to death with an axe. After a search had been made, it was discovered that a sum of money equivalent to about £500 was missing.

A hue and cry was raised, and the French police managed to trace the murderers from town to town through France and Spain to Portugal, whence, it was ascertained, they had taken ship for Liverpool. The assistance of Scotland Yard having been called in, a colleague and I were instructed to meet the boat at Liverpool and effect their arrest.

The "Sweeny Todds", who were only twenty-two and twenty years of age, appeared quite unconcerned when arrested. Charged at Bow Street, Joubberthie merely remarked, "This is a bit thick", while Clancier evidently considered that silence was golden.

When I took them over to Calais, in order to hand them over to the French authorities, I was unfortunate enough to strike the Channel in its most villainous mood. I suffered badly from "mal-de-mer", and my state when we arrived at Calais was such that a large portion of the sizeable crowd

which had gathered to witness the arrival of the murderers had, it appeared, no doubts as to the identity of at least one of them. "*Quelle vilaine gueule, mes amis,*" "Un vrai assassin," and similar doubtful compliments bore witness to the ravages which the wild waves had wrought on my normally (I hope) not too unprepossessing countenance; I was quite glad to hand over my captives and repair on board the ship again.

The last I heard of the "Sweeny Todds" was that one of them had decided to turn the French equivalent of "King's Evidence", and had thereby evaded the extreme penalty, while his accomplice, defiant to the last, had ended his career under the guillotine.

One of the most dramatic cases in which I have been responsible for bringing murderers to justice was what may be termed the "Cup Final" murder.

This resulted in the killing of one man and the stabbing of another, under very striking circumstances.

It happened on the day of a Football Cup Final, and some visitors from the North, who had probably been unsuccessful in their attempts to see the game, had tried to console themselves for their disappointment by an extensive tour round London, in the course of which they had seen many of the sights and, apparently, still more of the interior of numerous houses of refreshment. They had finally landed in the City Road, and an advanced hour of the night still found them in this, for strangers, somewhat dangerous neighbourhood.

They were passing a group of young hooligans and girls, who were lounging at a street corner, when one of them happened to make some remark which the youths took in bad part, alleging that it reflected on the character of one of the girls. An altercation followed, which soon degenerated into a scuffle, in which two of the Northern visitors received knife wounds. One of them were actually stabbed in the heart, and it is an astounding fact that he was able to run some fifty yards before he eventually dropped to the ground.

He was taken off to hospital, where a daring operation was performed, his heart being stitched up; it was too late, however, and he died.

We arrested the youths; they were a callous crowd, who seemed to treat the whole proceedings as a joke. Their leader was eventually sentenced to a long term of penal servitude for manslaughter, to which the charge of murder had been reduced.

CHAPTER IV

FORGERS—THE "KITE MOB"—THE "BOSS".

As I have already pointed out, criminals, like other people, tend to specialise. This is especially true in the case of forgers, who consider themselves among the aristocrats, and very rarely indeed stoop to the lower levels of crime. They are indeed true specialists in their dangerous profession. If caught, they are fully aware of the heavy punishment likely to be meted out to them; for forgery is an offence which the law has always regarded with the utmost gravity.

Forgery, it will be readily understood, is a crime which strikes at the very roots of commercial security. The expert forger has to lay his plans with the utmost care and caution. Not only has he to be a facile penman, but he has to be able to dispose of the results of his penmanship; and this necessitates an inside knowledge of his "market". With infinite patience and skill, he commences operations; these may necessitate the obtaining of a supply of cheques, blank or otherwise, signatures of intended victims, and a knowledge of the personal habits and movements of the persons to the prejudice of whose account he is about to operate.

In order to obtain this preliminary information, it may be necessary for him to suborn some trusted employee, with the consequent serious risk to himself of exposure at the very inception of his plan.

The state of the victim's account is, of course, one of the first things the forger has to ascertain, in order to obviate the risk of presenting cheques for sums larger than are likely to be met.

As will be seen later on, in the case of cheques stolen in transit and which have to be altered, more technical

knowledge is required of certain chemicals the operation of which I shall have occasion to describe later in this chapter.

The preliminary work, then, necessitates patience, skill and negotiations of the utmost delicacy. Where the danger becomes more acute is in the final stages when the cheque or cheques have to be "put down" (cashed), or documents have to be negotiated. One false move at this stage, or an alert cashier may mean the undoing of weeks of patient toil.

It will be gathered, then, that the forger is distinctly a man of parts.

But one of the cleverest of them all, in my opinion, was a super-crook, a man whom, were it not for the succession of daring and unprecedented coups which he undoubtedly engineered, one would have taken to be a mere legendary figure, a kind of Professor Moriarty, sprung full-fledged from the brain of some successful novelist.

Known as the "Boss", rumours had been rife about this mysterious individual wherever the underworld foregathered. The name was only too well-merited. It was his boast that he was one too many for the keenest brains among the "busies" (detectives) of London. With his "staff" and field organisation, no leader of a great army ever conceived vaster plans or carried them through with such ruthless and exacting discipline, forethought and success.

Detectives, looking in at well-known haunts of criminals, heard many a strange story of this very Napoleon of crime. But it seemed impossible to trace the leader himself. One might get into touch with his underlings; but that was as far as it went; their lips were sealed. In fact, they openly laughed at our unsuccessful efforts to reveal the identity of their chief.

All his work was thoroughly decentralised, delegated to a host of lieutenants who, able as they were, yet had but the remotest idea of how those orders, the punctilious carrying out of which was rigorously insisted on, came to

them, and still less of the identity of the supreme chief who issued them.

A real man of mystery, none knew his name or where he lived. His comings and goings none might observe. Only his reputation was sung. What was he doing at any given moment? Issuing crisp and succinct orders over his busy telephone, lounging in yonder saloon bar, or thoughtfully pacing, in immaculate garb, the streets of the West End, while he ruminated over his next coup? None could tell. As I said, he was a legendary figure, the real Edgar Wallace master-crook come to life.

This, then, was the man whom the Yard had to try and find, and a tougher problem they have rarely been set. It was handed over to me, and I knew at once that, for some considerable time to come, I should have my hands more than full. I was looking for a needle in a haystack.

Still, something had to be done, for the Yard can never acknowledge itself beaten; baffled for a time, perhaps a long time, yes; but, in the end the goods have to be delivered, and they almost invariably are.

I held a kind of preliminary conference with the other officers engaged on the case. We had but little to go upon. True, we knew that a clever gang of crooks was operating what is known among the criminal fraternity as the "kite lark"; this means stealing letters in transit, removing any cheques they may contain and, after suitable manipulation, cashing them at the banks. Someone was "taking the stripes out" (removing the crossings) in exceedingly clever fashion, and it was my job to put a stop to their little game.

Right from the start, it was clear that we were up against a brain quite out of the ordinary, for the organisation of this particular gang was well-nigh perfect, and they were evidently directed by a past-master at his art. Could it be the "Boss"?

We succeeded in establishing the fact that the majority of the letters were stolen from the letter-boxes of offices

which had not yet opened for business. Should the cheques found in the letters be only for small sums, then the amount payable was cleverly increased, the cheques being subsequently presented for payment across the counter of the bank in the ordinary way.

It was a process in which speed was of the utmost importance; the whole operation was, in fact, carried through with such rapidity that the cheques had, in most cases, been presented for payment and the money received before the actual thefts were discovered.

When we came on the scene, the crooks had been at their little game for several weeks, cashing many cheques each day, so that the proceeds of their depredations must already have totalled thousands of pounds. Practically every bank in London had suffered from the attentions of this gang.

In a case like this, one of the first things to be done is to prepare a list of criminals of the type likely to be responsible for a speciality of this kind. The Yard being always in possession of a mass of information of this nature, this was not a lengthy task.

The next stage was the usual weary round of waiting, watching, and "shadowing" suspects day and night, the examination and rejection of a series of clues, and the apparently hopeless search for the prime-mover who, I began to feel more and more certain, must be the mysterious "Boss".

My men and I pushed our enquiries to the limit; in the rendezvous of thieves and crooks which we combed for any possible clue, we always met with the same answer.

"The Boss? Lor' luvy er, guv'nor, now ye're askin'; I know *wot* 'e does, but 'oo 'e is, I can't tell yer, nor can't nobody else; I reckon 'e's got all the 'busies' taped."

It was fortunate that one of my assistants was Detective-Sergeant Wiltshire, a past-master in the art of shadowing. He and I, with two other officers, were enabled at last, after weeks of patient work, to track a certain individual

who, I felt sure, had something to do with the business, to a house.

I immediately issued instructions to keep this house under constant observation, with the result that, one morning, Wiltshire, another officer and I followed this man out of his own district into the Goswell Road, where he eventually entered a public-house. An officer I sent in to investigate returned with the report "they've got a cheque; it's a stolen one, for a certainty."

I asked him whether he thought that they were going to try and "put it down" (cash it), and he replied "it looks like it; why, here they come, and there's evidently something up".

The man and his two companions were so intent on their business that it was an easy matter to follow them, unperceived, to the Underground station. Still, as we knew the type of men we had to deal with, we took every precaution. This proved just as well, for two out of the three men, before taking a train, came back up the stairs to have a careful look round at each exit. They failed to notice us and returned down the stairs to the trains.

Losing no time in following them, I ascertained from the clerk that they had booked to Kilburn High Road, whither we also proceeded by the next train.

On arrival at our destination, an old wound in my leg began to remind me of its existence, and threatened to delay me. "Go on ahead, and keep a sharp look-out," I said to my companions, "I'll be right after you." I have, as a matter of fact, often found it a paying proposition to follow suspects "fore and aft".

That morning, I had cause to bless my bad leg for, as I was painfully limping down the street, I was lucky enough to spot the "putter-down" standing at the counter of a bank. I calmly continued my walk, as if nothing had happened, but halted a little farther along. Turning round quickly, I saw the "putter-down" come out of the bank and stop a passing boy.

Sheltering in the doorway of a shop, I carefully watched the actions of the crook, who was evidently trying to induce the lad to take a cheque into the bank. The latter, with a shake of his head, moved off, apparently seeing that there was something suspicious in the other's request.

By this time, the two other crooks had appeared and joined their companion. I therefore prepared for speedy action, as did my two colleagues, who had seen what was transpiring and were quickly returning to me.

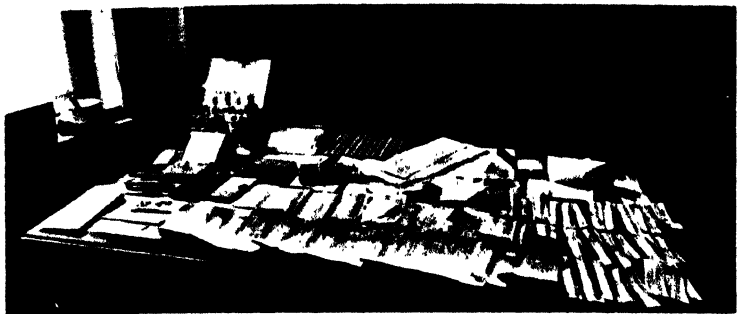
Just then the crooks saw them and one of the three, dashing off with a warning shout, passed quite close to my place of concealment in the shop-door. Just as he passed me he drew something from his pocket and put it in his mouth, swallowing it; it was the cheque he had attempted to cash at the bank!

"After them," I yelled, rushing out as quickly as my bad leg would allow me. However, I quite forgot the pain in the heat of the chase, and we soon rounded our men up and lodged them in the police station.

I looked our captives over, deciding that none of them was quite in the "Boss" class, though one of them was a daring criminal, well-known to the police as "Three-fingered Jack". The "putter-down", who was not known to the police, looked a typical bank-clerk in appearance, a fact which must have been of great assistance to him in his "profession".

It was unfortunate that a good piece of evidence, in the shape of the stolen cheque, was now in his stomach! Still, on searching our captives, we managed to find quite a lot of incriminating matter. "Three-fingered Jack", for instance, had on him several portions of cheques, one bearing a signature. It was foolish of him to keep them, as they were traced as being part of the proceeds of a raid on the Camden Town Post Office some little time before.

The Camden Town robbery was a particularly daring one, planned on the grand scale, and was obviously the work of the gang I was after. It was one of the most audacious and



THREE-FINGERED JACK'S COLLECTION OF AIDS AND TOOLS USED FOR FORGERY
 CHIEFLY STOLEN FROM LETTER BOXES

and by the author when raiding his den. Note the stolen cheques
 forgery. The box contains a complete



MORE OF THREE-FINGERED JACK'S COLLECTION

With the author are Ex-Detective-Inspector Wiltshire and Detective-Sergeant Owen,
 who assisted in the capture of the gang.

[Face page 54]

carefully-thought out raids of the century, and showed how wide the ramifications of the gang were.

In the early hours of a winter morning, while the sorters at the big post office in Eversholt Street were taking a rest for refreshment, a grey car containing two or three men drove up to the office. These men clambered quickly out of the car, forced the iron gates into the loading yard, seized fifteen bags of mail, which they placed in the car, and made off.

The Yard was immediately advised, and the van traced through St. Pancras and Commercial Road to Rotherhithe, where thirteen of the bags, some of which had been rifled, were found; the other two were recovered later.

The actual discovery of the missing bags was made by a milkman going his early morning rounds. The cheque which the "putter-down" had attempted to cash at the bank turned out to have been contained in a letter from one of the missing bags. As a matter of fact, this cheque had been cleverly altered from £1 13s. od. to £40 13s. od., but it so happened that the cashier at the bank knew that this particular cheque had been stopped, which was why the "putter-down" failed to negotiate it.

It is extraordinary how the public assist the forgers by the careless way in which they fill in the amount on their cheques. Take this case, for example. A cheque was sent by a firm in payment of account for five pounds, fourteen shillings. The word "Five" is commenced at least an inch from the margin and, on coming to the £ in the cheque, the figure "5" is written at least a quarter of an inch from the £.

The letter-box thieves stole the cheque which was transferred to the forger, "Three-fingered Jack", who in a short time, had inserted the word "Ninety" in front of the word "Five", and the figure "9" in front of the "5", the crossings being taken out by acid. Thus the cheque was made payable for an amount of £95 14s. od., not a bad morning's work, once it had been passed at the bank.

Photography is one of the greatest aids in showing up the forger's work. You can easily trace the removal of the crossings and also detect the inserted or altered words and figures. Again, the forger has not time to work with the same ink as the person who filled in the cheque, and a chemical analysis of inks found in possession of the forger quickly reveals that which he has used on the cheque.

Perhaps my readers will take a hint from me when filling in their cheques in future, and see that they leave no space in which the forger can operate. I do not, of course, anticipate any thanks from the "kite mob" for this disinterested advice.

The "Kite Mob" showed their cleverness in dealing only with small cheques. They reasoned that the business account of any person or firm was good up to about £90, but that awkward questions might be asked if the forged cheque were presented for a large amount, which there might be no funds to meet. In this case, the cashier, knowing that the cheque had been stopped, asked the man to wait a moment. He then went to telephone to the drawer, but the "putter-down" took fright. Thus the finding of some insignificant scraps of paper led up to the laying-bare of the Camden Town Post Office raid.

Going back to the previous case, I asked "Three-fingered Jack" at the police station to account for the torn cheques in his pocket, but he maintained a stubborn silence. Nor would he give any information when charged, going to the cells with a cheerful grin, confident he had mystified us.

The contents of the three prisoners' pockets did not reveal anything likely to be of much use to us, except a pencilled telephone number. Again my heart leapt. Were we on the trail of the "Boss" at last?

Locating the telephone number as belonging to a house in Finsbury Park, I searched this, after some expostulation on the part of the good lady who lived there. It was evident that I had not yet arrived at the end of my search; the

"Boss" certainly did not live there; still, I found, carefully concealed, a complete forger's outfit, and, more interesting still, upwards of 200 cheques in course of treatment. I also found the needle and acid by which the crossings were removed and a pot of colouring liquid. Many of the cheques I found were among those reported as having been stolen. That settled the hash of "Three-fingered Jack", for it was his own telephone number I had found, but it did not seem to bring me much nearer the "Boss".

However, from then on, we did make a certain amount of progress; the further we advanced, the wider the ramifications of the gang appeared to be. It was evident that the "kite lark" was but one of their activities, and not the most important, well organised as it was. The method of procedure was as follows:—

About ten men started their day's round at 6 a.m., making a tour of letter-boxes, armed with ingenious implements made from umbrella-ribs. By breakfast-time they had all returned to headquarters, the letters had been opened, the cheques removed, and the waste paper destroyed. The cheques were then taken to "Three-fingered Jack", who removed the crossings, altered the amounts, and gave them to the "putter-down". They would then be cashed directly after the banks opened, normally the busiest portion of the day, thus inviting a minimum of scrutiny.

While we could get nothing further out of "Three-fingered Jack," complaints now began to pour in from Post Office Savings Bank depositors, who wanted to know how their books had gone astray. It was explained by the Savings Bank officials that it was normal procedure for depositors to be asked to forward their books to headquarters, from time to time, that they might be checked with the ledgers. Now depositors were complaining that their books had not been returned. The officials added that, unfortunately, in almost every case, money had been obtained on them from various post offices. It was, of course, possible that there might have been collusion in the office; in any case, the

position was a very serious one, and had to be cleared up as soon as possible.

Well, the ramp was stopped, but not by a series of brilliant feats of detection; that may be all very well in the pages of novels; but, in actual life, most of the Yard's triumphs are principally due to sheer, monotonous hard work.

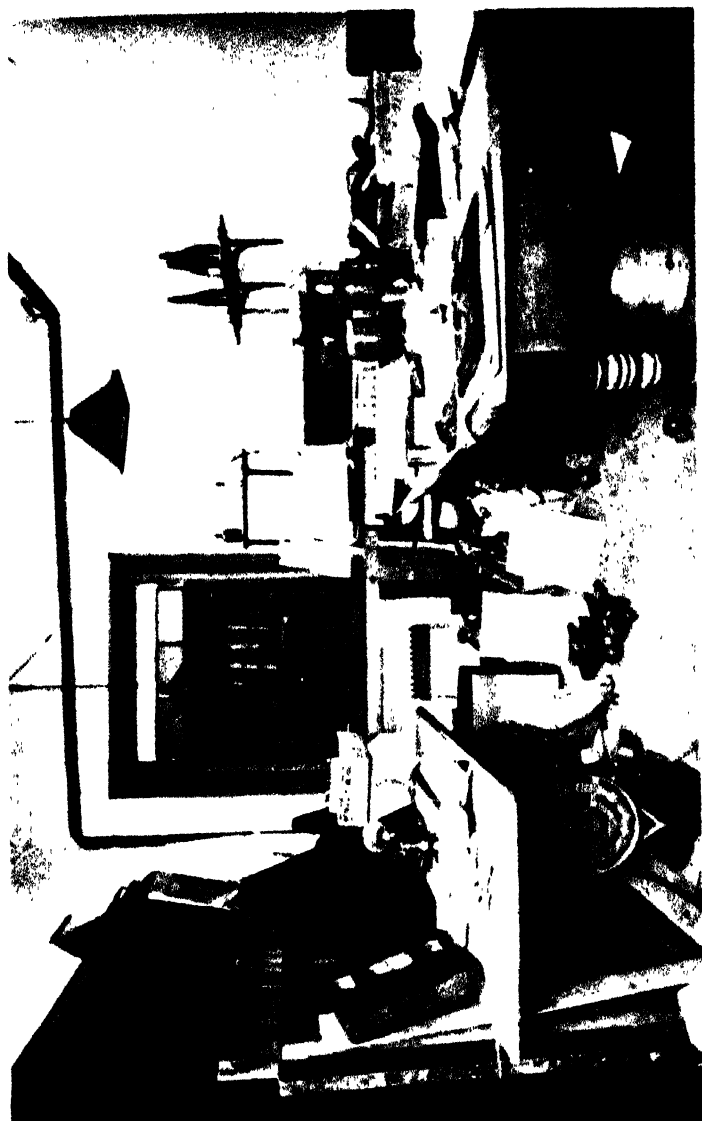
We knew the withdrawal orders were being forged, but we did not know who was forging them; we could only guess.

Followed the usual long, weary investigation which, only too often, brought us up against a blank wall. Still, little as we dreamed it, we were nearing the end of the trail. We had shadowed and questioned so many criminals that it was, I suppose, inevitable that, sooner or later, we should strike lucky. One afternoon we did.

Two men had gone to the Westminster post office to cash a withdrawal order, which turned out to be forged. In the scramble following our arrival on the scene, one of the men escaped, but I had recognised him and, as I knew where he was living, he was soon arrested. More members of the gang were thus falling into our net, but where was the "Boss"?

My curiosity and anxiety were further whetted by tales which began to circulate about a last gigantic coup which he was said to be staging, involving a sum of no less than £50,000! If this were really to be his last venture, it would also be our last chance to catch him. So we redoubled our vigilance; but, again and again, just as we thought we were on the threshold of success, back we would be plunged into a morass of doubt and uncertainty.

Still, as I say, we were getting nearer. All our tracking and investigations led us in one direction, towards the West End. This trailing had to be done so carefully, for fear of arousing our quarry's suspicion, that, time and again, we lost the trail. Always, however, it was taken up again, until finally we were able to narrow down our enquiries to a certain area of streets.



And there we stopped. The forgeries began to get fewer and further between. Was the "Boss" getting frightened?

Then, at last came the great day when we went to a certain house in Earl's Court Road, and asked to interview a gentleman who lived in two rooms on the second floor. We were told he had left a few days previously, without giving any address. It was possible that he would return, however, for he was still paying for the rooms. Our informant added that the gentleman's visitors were a queer lot. Still more interesting was the information that he never slept in the rooms, but used them solely as a workshop. On my asking what his job was, the landlord said that he believed that he was experimenting with some process work. "I have never been in the rooms since I let them to him," he added; "they're always locked at night."

It did seem that we had finally traced, if not the "Boss" himself, at least his lair, and I felt considerably happier than I had done for weeks when I returned to the Yard to acquaint my superiors of my discovery.

It was quickly decided to raid the place and, when we broke in, what a sight met our eyes! The place was a regular forgery factory, and the plant more elaborate than any I have ever seen. A large process camera stood on a table in one of the rooms, which was fitted up for photographic work. The complete outfit, which weighed over three tons, included machinery for printing, photographic plates, developing tanks, acids, lenses, and a quantity of paper for bank notes and other uses.

Well, there was the plant, and we knew the use to which it had been put; but we were still short of the full evidence we required.

The whole of the plant was therefore removed in vans to the Yard, where it was examined by experts, while we continued our search in the rooms, emptying cupboards, tapping walls, and carefully examining floor-boards. All that day we worked while, in the streets outside, the raucous cries of newsboy blared forth our discovery to the multitude.

Still we could find nothing. Were we to fail, at the eleventh hour?

Suddenly one of my assistants, in a voice dulled by fatigue, murmured, "Here you are, Mr. Leach," holding out a piece of blotting-paper which he had found among some rubbish. It was the long-awaited clue!

Galvanised into fresh life by the discovery on the blotting-paper of impressions of the obverse and reverse of a post office money order, we threw ourselves into our task with renewed zeal. Ah, what is that? A piece of thin cardboard, bearing, printed by photographic process, a magnified impression of the "Pounds Shillings Pence" and the wavy lines which are found on money orders. A memorandum book, with an address in Kensington, was also found. Off we went there, only to find that the "Boss" had flown; he had been living there and had left behind him some property which I was able to identify as stolen.

I returned to the house in the Earl's Court Road. Unwelcome news awaited me. As I entered the telephone bell rang. It was the officer on night duty speaking.

"I have bad news for you," he said; "your younger son has been knocked down by an omnibus, and is lying seriously injured in Lambeth Hospital." My chief's car was at once placed at my disposal, and, with thoughts of the "Boss" banished for the moment from my mind, I sped to the hospital, wondering always, "Shall I arrive in time?"

My boy was terribly knocked about and in a serious condition, but he rallied on recognising me, and his first words were, "Did you get him, Dad?" "His number is up," I replied in a distrait fashion, "but never mind that, what about you?" "Never mind me, Dad," he pluckily replied, "Get on with the job."

And back to Earl's Court and "on with the job" it had to be, though you may imagine how worried I felt.

By this time we knew who the mysterious "Boss" was, for his criminal record was filed at the Yard; it remained

to apprehend him, and this obviously would be no easy task.

We were not long in discovering the heel of Achilles—a weakness for the opposite sex; so we began to trail a few likely women, hoping that they would lead us to him. They did.

One day, with a companion, I was following a woman in Oxford Street, when I suddenly saw approaching me a man whom, from information supplied, I was now able to identify as the "Boss" himself. I am convinced that he also recognised me, though he pretended not to do so. Therefore I decided to follow suit and strolled on, without giving any signs of interest. Directly he got abreast of me, however, I turned and, with a quick movement, pinioned his arms to his sides, bundling him into a taxi which happened conveniently to be passing.

His aplomb did not desert him. "Well, Mr. Leach, and where do we go now?" he coolly asked. I was able to enlighten him. In due course he was charged with the forgery of money orders and sentenced to two sentences, of four and three years' imprisonment.

After his arrest, we were able to learn details of the projected £50,000 coup. This was both simple and daring and, as he thought, perfectly safe.

It was a gigantic plot against the Post Office. The "Boss", once his preparations for forging money orders and advice notes were complete, intended to put the whole coup through within twenty-four hours. Through the good services of an accomplice in the Post Office, the forged advice notes were to be loaded into the outgoing mails, literally in hundreds. Next day, the "Boss's" assistants, using fast motor-cars, were to tour the country, presenting the forged orders at various offices to which the forged advice notes had been sent, and collecting the cash.

The very simplicity of the plan was, in fact, its greatest guarantee of success, and there is little doubt that, had we not stepped in so dramatically at the eleventh hour,

the master-criminal would have netted his fifty thousand pounds.

So passed into temporary oblivion the cleverest forger with whom I have ever had to deal.

His arrest was a triumph, not of spectacular methods, but of sheer hard slogging. It is, in fact, in nearly every case, the arrest itself which is spectacular and not the soul-wearying spade-work which leads up to it.

Many years ago, when I was still a young uniformed police-constable, two of the top-notchers at the game actually resided next door to my home at Brixton. For some days they had been under the observation of Yard officers, and their arrest was imminent for serious forgeries in the City.

The night before the arrest took place, the twain were in high spirits, and a party of some sort was evidently in progress, for the strains of various choruses could be heard, interspersed by bursts of raucous laughter. Apparently they were totally unconscious of the identity of their next-door neighbours. When the strains of that old favourite "You are the honeysuckle, I am the bee" reached our ears, the humour of the situation was too much for my father and myself, and we could not help joining in the unrestrained laughter which came from the other side of the wall.

Harking back for a moment to the "kite mob", of whom I was speaking, I will terminate this chapter by an account of the dramatic end with which one of the members of this gang met.

This was "Canadian John", quite a young man, but one who had had an astounding career of crime. Suave and well-dressed, with an extensive knowledge of the Metropolis, he was a most successful forger. At the time I speak of, the police had been after him for some days for frauds on a well-known bank. John, however, actually took up his quarters at a leading hotel, whence he rang up a type-writing agency and asked them to send round a girl with a machine.

When she arrived, he dictated to her a number of letters addressed to various firms in London, after which he produced a cheque for £350 which he asked her to take round to the bank and cash. She did so, upon which John paid her for her work and she left. Next day he rang up another typewriting agency and repeated the procedure, the cheque produced on this occasion being for £700.

When the girl took this to the bank, however, the cashier became suspicious and informed the authorities. The police arrived at the hotel too late to find John, who had disappeared. The subsequent investigations by the police and the bank authorities revealed a remarkable state of affairs. About a month previously a man had opened an account with £40 at the Holborn branch of the bank in question; this man, however, was not Canadian John. The account was drawn on at various times until the balance remaining was only some £5. Then the two cheques were presented by John, for £350 and £700; these were made out on forms extracted from the cheque-book given to the man who had opened the account. They were drawn in the name of a very distinguished client of the bank, who always had a large sum to his credit. The forgery was very cleverly done, and almost indistinguishable from the genuine signature.

The information given by the two stenographers enabled the police to identify the forgeries as the work of Canadian John, whom they badly wanted, and he was eventually arrested while having dinner in a West End restaurant. On his arrival at Bow Street, he was searched, and over £200 was found in his possession. It was then arranged to put him up the next morning at an identification parade in connection with the attempt to obtain £700 from the bank by fraud.

Though he was visited at hourly intervals in his cell, he was found by the gaoler, making his usual round just after midnight, hanged. John had removed the strap from his overcoat and, tying this round a water pipe close to the ceiling, had fastened it to his neck. He was quite dead.

Canadian John was an ex-Varsity man, whose downfall was due to his mixing with a very fast set in London. Finding himself in financial difficulties, he forged a cheque; his parents, in order to save his name, paid the amount, and John was sent abroad. He was unable to keep away from London and, shortly after his return, was again arrested for forgery; this second exploit set him off on the career of crime which was to lead him, at the early age of thirty-three, to a suicide's grave.

Though the art of forgery has flourished throughout the centuries, it is very rarely, in my experience at least, that its exponents, despite their undoubted care and cleverness, escape the final penalty. Though this, at one time, was death and though, even now, it is visited with very severe sentences, its addicts still seem to think that the game is, in spite of its immense risks, well worth the candle.

The unremitting war waged by Scotland Yard upon the forgers, and especially upon the "kite mobs", has, however, notably diminished their ranks. The experience gained by the banks has resulted in measures being taken which make tampering with cheques increasingly difficult. As I said earlier on, however, it is really for the public to collaborate more closely with the authorities by exercising greater care when filling out cheque-forms and other documents.

CHAPTER V

RECEIVERS OR "FENCES"—THE MODERN FAGIN—WHEN I POSED AS A RECEIVER—THE WOMAN IN BLACK—FROM THE "STICKS" TO THE "FENCES".

THE "fence" is one of the most important, nay indispensable adjuncts to the criminal fraternity. For it is an old and true saying that, were there no receivers, there would be no thieves.

It is one thing, and a comparatively easy thing, to purloin valuables; quite another, and an infinitely harder and more dangerous task to dispose of them safely and to the best advantage.

Once the glittering jewels are removed from their settings—and no time is ever lost in doing this—their destination may be the headquarters of various well-known international "fences" at such places as Amsterdam, Paris, Antwerp and even New York.

Fagin's profession is in the nature of a speciality; it is but rarely that your burglar, housebreaker or other criminal settles down to receiving when he retires from an active career; nor are there many instances of the trade being handed down from father to son, as in other branches of the criminal world. Yet more rarely does the same person double the trades of burglar and receiver, though I shall, later on in this chapter, refer to one who did.

There are many reasons for all this, one of the most cogent being that the "fence" usually runs considerably more risk than the thief of whose spoil he undertakes to dispose. Once the latter's task is successfully performed and the "swag" planted with a receiver, he runs little chance of detection; but the receiver not only knows full well that, if caught, his

punishment will be considerably heavier than that meted out to the actual burglar, but also he is faced with the by no means easy task of dealing with the booty to the best advantage and with the minimum of risk.

Then again, in the nature of things, the premises of the receiver are bound to become a rendezvous for criminals, which, unless the greatest care is exercised, is sooner or later bound to become known to the police.

The truth of this will be the better appreciated when you read my own experiences on one of the occasions on which I posed as a receiver and gathered a rare harvest of "clients."

When the receiver has taken over the "swag" from the burglar and paid him, the real difficulties begin; he has to camouflage the stolen goods so as to render them unrecognisable, and then try to dispose of them to the best advantage. This is a process which demands infinite daring and resource; time is especially of importance, since every hour adds to the risk of discovery.

So, directly the burglar or other criminal has been paid and gone his way, more or less rejoicing, his part in the business is over, and he has leisure to contemplate his next "coup." Whereas the "fence has to get to work immediately, breaking up, melting down and otherwise dealing with the goods, so as to allow a reasonable chance of their safe and speedy disposal.

The business of a receiver is, of course, a very remunerative one; in view of the grave risks incurred, it has to be if it is to attract sufficient recruits. Burglars almost invariably complain of the low prices given by "fences"; but the latter are, from their point of view, justified in levying a high toll in return for accepting the major portion of the risk.

"Fences" often finance "jobs," and act as "putters-up" or instigators. They are prepared to risk, as in a legitimate business deal, a certain amount of capital in return for a heavy, though reasonable dividend. "Shopping,"

or double-crossing, is also not unknown, on the part of the thieves, and this is an added risk which receivers have to contemplate.

Take it all in all, the average receiver fully earns, in trouble and worry, the lion's share of the spoil he demands and gets.

I am particularly well qualified to enlarge on the large profits made by receivers, for, on more than one occasion, I posed as one. Let me give you one instance of this, in which we made a particularly rich haul—of thieves.

It occurred in this way. There had been a regular epidemic of burglaries in North London and in Hampstead in particular; as a result of a special police offensive launched there, two well-known burglars were caught red-handed. They were ostensibly carrying on the legitimate trade of painters, touching up the outside of the house. But the inside appeared to be of more interest to them, for they entered and made a good haul of valuables. They were, however, arrested before they could get away.

On making a search at the home of one of these men, a quantity of property stolen in the course of other burglaries in the neighbourhood was discovered, the culprit who was an "old lag" (convict with several convictions), faced with the prospect of a severe sentence, decided to turn "King's evidence," in the hope of mitigating his penalty.

He confessed that he had taken the proceeds of one of his burglaries to the shop of a certain refiner in the East End, about which we had had our suspicions for some time past, as being really a receiving-place for stolen jewellery. His confession provided us with the necessary evidence for proceeding against the proprietors of the shop, two young brothers. We arrested them and searched their premises, on which we found a veritable harvest of stolen property.

Now that we had got our hands on the "fences," we thought we stood an excellent chance, if we acted warily, of gathering in some of their clients.

Accordingly, my chief, the late Detective-Inspector Kyd, sent for me, and outlined his plan, in which it was suggested I should play the leading part.

"Charley," he said to me, "you are something like the elder of the receiver brothers in appearance; I want you to stand behind the counter in the shop for a day. All you need to complete the disguise is an apron and a pair of spectacles. What about it?"

I was always willing to try anything once, and orders are orders, so, merely pausing to select a trusty assistant in the person of Detective-Sergeant Frank Trott, and to provide myself with the necessary apron and spectacles, I went off to take up my new job.

Trott and I cast a glance around to get the hang of the premises and to outline our plan of campaign. We saw a grilled counter, something like that of a bank, on which were spread scales, weights and the rest of the paraphernalia of a refiner. Behind there was a furnace, with crucibles.

Hastily donning some overalls belonging to the brothers, we prepared for business.

By a quick perusal of some trade publications which were lying handy I attempted to glean some idea of the current price of gold and silver; meanwhile I told Trott to remain in hiding behind a partition, and arranged a code signal with him, one tap of my foot signifying "nothing doing," two that he was to come round and help to arrest the customers. Before I had time to give more than a glance at the market quotations, in came our first customer.

He proved to be a well-known "old lag," and I feared that recognition was mutual. But no, my disguise held good!

The customer handed over a little packet. "What's this

little lot worth, guv'nor?" he asked. By dint of great play with my spectacles and a learned air, I was able to put a good countenance on the affair, and weighed the contents with the air of a real connoisseur. I asked him if he had anything else. "Only some 'white stuff', guv'nor," was his reply, and he passed over some silver articles. Saying "You will get your cash inside", I ushered the unsuspecting fly into Trott's web, where he remained fast.

Then the fun really began. One after another the customers walked into the shop. The second man asked me if I could do anything in lamp-tops (the platinum in electric bulbs is worth a certain amount of money). Later on he brought me six dozen, and as it transpired that they belonged to his employer, he also was shown into Trott's parlour.

He was quickly followed by two or three other customers with goods of various descriptions, and by this time I was beginning to think that trade was a bit too good. Trott already had his hands full in the back parlour, and still they came.

Then trouble started.

In came a giant of a man, whom I recognised as an policeman who had gone wrong. "Long Ted" was a real terror, though he had been a good man in the Force. He had actually served at one time under my father.

He was well aware of the considerable quantities of sheet gold and silver which Clerkenwell refiners keep by them.

"Long Ted" may, incidentally, be said to have been the original "cat-burglar", for it was by the roof that he made most of his nefarious entrances. Not that he always came off scot-free, for he had known the inside of a prison on more than one occasion before he strolled into "my" shop that day.

In this case recognition was mutual, in spite of my disguise. With a curse, he made a bolt for the door, closely pursued by me. I was just in time to "cop" a real "hay-maker" on the jaw, and down I went, but not "out"; in a

trice I was up again, ran after him and finally caught him. Then ensued a battle royal, and in the end my superior youth and fitness told their tale and I was able to overpower him; I brought him back and lodged him with the others in Trott's parlour; he promptly egged the others on to attack me.

'Twas a strange scene; in the fitful glare of the refiner's furnace, Trott stood on guard over the captives, with up-lifted hammer, while "Long Ted" and I started round two of our little encounter. Amid shouts of encouragement to my opponent from the other captives, we went at it hammer-and-tongs until finally a good right swing stretched Ted senseless on the floor. With that blow, the mass-mentality of criminals came into play; the others promptly quietened down. We found some stolen property in Ted's pockets; he was in no condition to resist. Indeed, he afterwards apologised to me for the trouble he had caused. It was a matter of particular regret to me to think that this man had actually served in the Police under my own father.

As a matter of fact, Ted had actually been going straight for some time before this little episode, and it was only a temporary and inexplicable lapse which landed him in my hands. I am, however, glad to say that I was instrumental in saving him from prison, and thereby probably from continuing his criminal career, instead of terminating it with this last unfortunate venture. Later on I received a letter from him, acknowledging the help he had received from me at a crisis in his career, and I may perhaps be pardoned for quoting this human document:—

"DEAR MR. LEACH,

"Just a line to let you know that I have changed my vocation. I am very pleased to inform you that I am going on all right and have the prospect of a brighter future in front of me. We are in very respectable apartments and are very well satisfied with the alteration. I know you will be pleased to see I have made good use of the money I have earned and I shall hold you responsible for my transformation in life."

Letters like this are a real pleasure to receive and go far to comfort a detective in his hard and too often thankless task. It is many years since I heard from Ted, but I fully believe he is doing well.

Well, we gradually added to the number of our customers and captives until the parlour became uncomfortably full. Yet another man who called, however, recognised me. Yelling "Blimey, it's Leach", he dashed out into the street, with me, apron and all, in hot pursuit. I eventually came up with him and secured him, but a large and hostile crowd followed me back to the shop, and things began to look very unpleasant. Fortunately, the long-awaited reinforcements now made their appearance, and then all was peace.

We closed the shop, well satisfied with the best day's "business" it had ever done.

When I reported to Detective-Inspector Kyd, he asked me how I had got on and whether I had had any luck. I was able to inform him that the cells were full as the result of my labours. "Not so bad for one day, Charley", he grinned.

This was not the only occasion on which I posed, with good results, as a "fence", but the tale will serve to point my contention that the profession is a dangerous one, in which the heavy profits are almost outweighed by the immense risks.

Two of the cleverest "fences" with whom I ever came in contact, and who succeeded in keeping out of jail longer than most of their colleagues were "Sally", known as the "Woman in Black", and her husband. Sally was a country-bred girl, but she was no bumpkin. Tall, handsome, with silky, golden hair and innocent blue eyes, she decided to seek her fortune in London, where she rightly thought she could better capitalise her undoubted beauty and special brand of intelligence.

Making a modest start as a general servant, she soon made the acquaintance of a dashing cavalier, who seemed to have money to burn, but no apparent occupation.

He proceeded to show Sally the sights of the town, pointing out the advantages of the broad and easy path, in preference to the narrow way of rectitude. He had a willing pupil, and it was not long before the pair decided to raid the flat where Sally was in service.

When her mistress returned one day, she found that the simple little country maid had flown, and that with her had disappeared most of her clothing and jewellery.

Sally's cavalier, whose actual and profitable occupation was that of a "fence", was not long in disposing to the best advantage of this haul. His flat was provided with scales, weights, furnace, acids and all the paraphernalia necessary for dealing with the "swag".

He began to be so struck with the possibilities of the country maiden that he finally decided to marry her. From now on she was to be his partner in life and in crime, acting as decoy for the gang which her husband led.

Rumours began to circulate in the underworld of the West End that a new "star" had arisen on the criminal firmament, the "Woman in Black", a leader of the "boys", and able to handle a "cane" (jemmy) with the best of them.

It was about this time that my then chief at Scotland Yard, the late Chief-Inspector Ward (who was afterwards killed by a Zeppelin bomb), asked me to select some smart assistants and form a "flying squad" to try and round up some of the fences who were infesting the West End.

We were successful in effecting some useful captures; I was then transferred to Vine Street in order to deal with an outbreak of jewel thefts in that quarter.

I have always been a believer in the motto "Find your 'fence' and you catch your thieves"; thieves must go to fences, as I have explained above, to convert their swag into cash, and, while in charge of my flying squad at the Yard, I made it my business to keep a close watch on all those members of the underworld whom I had reason to suspect of being "fences".

Now, rumours in the underworld reach the police almost as soon as they reach the crooks, and it was not long before tales about the "Woman in Black" began to come to my ears. I therefore kept my eyes wide open, and eventually was able to locate a certain flat near the Russell Square Tube station as her probable place of residence, and also the headquarters of her husband and his gang.

Continuous observation on this flat resulted in my being rewarded, one morning, by the sight of a good-looking woman, dressed in black, leaving it, accompanied by a man. The woman answered the description of the woman of whom the underworld were talking, while her husband, the "fence", was already known to me by sight.

Further observation was kept on the flat and, from time to time, other members of the gang were seen to enter and leave it. Many of these were old hands well-known to me.

Up to that moment I had no definite evidence on which to proceed, and you cannot obtain a conviction in a British court of law on the strength of mere suspicion, however well-founded you may know this to be. I could therefore do nothing but make a note of this rendezvous of thieves and file it for future reference. This mental note was to prove very useful to me later on, when I was transferred to Vine Street to investigate the jewel robberies. And, not long after I had taken up this duty news came through of an audacious flat robbery in the West End.

It appeared that, during the temporary absence of a maid, who had been left in sole charge of a flat, thieves had broken in and removed everything of value. The sole clue appeared to be that, just about the time the robbery was supposed to have taken place, a woman had been seen by a passer-by to ring the flat bell and enter.

From the description given of this woman, I felt certain that she was none other than the "Woman in Black".

A further interesting feature of the robbery was the fact that the maid did not return to her employers; on an examination of her references, I found them to be faked.

From further information given me by the owner of the flat, I identified her as the wife of one of the members of the "Woman in Black's" gang.

She had obviously been "planted" in the flat by the "fence", so that she might leave the way clear for the "Woman in Black", after previously giving her the tip when to call. Thus "Sally", with the careful training received from her husband and knowing exactly what was worth "lifting", had been able to proceed thoroughly and expeditiously, handing out the valuables to members of the gang who were in waiting.

As I have already indicated, I knew exactly where to look for the "Woman in Black" and her husband, so I proceeded to the flat near Russell Square, accompanied by other plainclothes officers, and, after a period of observation, was able to "shadow" the "fence" from the flat to Russell Square Tube station.

Here matters nearly went wrong. He must have had his suspicions aroused in some manner, for, after booking to Piccadilly Circus, he bought a paper at the bookstall and, giving a furtive glance round him, suddenly bolted out of the station.

We were, however, close at his heels, when he quickly turned and asked us what the devil we meant by following him, emphasising the question by aiming a blow at me. A lively little set-to followed, in the course of which the "fence" nearly succeeded in making good his escape; we were able to hang on to him, however, and in due course shepherded him back to the flat, where we found the "Woman in Black" in bed. She was far from being perturbed at this sudden irruption of a party of gentlemen. "Good morning", she greeted us, "you are welcome to have a look round my room, if that is what you have come for."

It was an invitation which we had no hesitation in accepting; but, though we conducted our examination with the utmost thoroughness, we failed at first to discover any incriminating evidence.

We noticed, however, that Sally seemed loath to leave her bed and, as we hardly thought that, in her case, this reluctance was due to motives of delicacy, we finally had to insist on her rising. When she had done so, we searched the bed and found under the mattress several articles of jewellery which we knew had been stolen from the West End flat.

The game was up, so far as Sally and her husband were concerned, but our luck was in; for, very shortly, other members of the gang began to arrive and were welcomed. They were too astonished to put up much of a resistance. So we made a good haul.

At the subsequent trial the "fence", to his credit, tried to shoulder all the blame, and did his utmost to keep his wife out of trouble. In this he was, of course, unsuccessful, and both of them were sentenced, together with the other members of the gang whom we had captured. The casualties to the gang were, in fact, so heavy that it was effectively broken up.

To the best of my knowledge, the "fence" has long since joined the great majority; but I often wonder what has happened to the "Woman in Black", and whether she eventually decided to become a respectable member of society.

Another master "fence" was an aged Australian, whom I will call "Long Jim", a grey-bearded old gentleman of venerable appearance, who became a very king of receivers, and gathered round him a formidable gang.

Long Jim was the son of a wealthy Australian sheep-farmer. Inheriting some £15,000 on his father's death, he went in for horse-racing, eventually becoming one of the most successful owners on the Australian Turf. After a long career of good fortune, during which he won immense sums, there came a turn of the wheel and he finally found himself ruined by his reckless plunging. So there disappeared the wealthy racing man, and there arose in his stead the master crook, sponsor of many a daring "coup".

It may be interesting to learn how we got the evidence we required. Long Jim was then living in a very quiet street, on which it was very difficult to keep regular observation. I therefore conceived the idea of getting one of my men to masquerade as an inoffensive medical student, and, as such, he took rooms in the house where Long Jim lived.

Our studious friend, with his spectacles and learned mien, was naturally not in the least likely to arouse the suspicions of the "fence"; as a matter of fact, many was the midnight "crack" they had, discussing the prospects of the medical profession and also those of the difficult trade of a "journeyman jeweller".

These discussions were frequently renewed, up to the point where Long Jim threw discretion to the winds and, secure in his conviction that his young friend could have no possible connection with the authorities, imparted information which was, to say the least of it, indiscreet.

When the dénouement came, after his arrest, and the true rôle of his young medico friend came to light, Long Jim's face was a study!

Among the accomplices arrested at the same time were a young couple. The wife would be provided by Long Jim with forged references which enabled her to obtain situations in various hotels, and so to get inside information for the

gang. She would make it her business to mark down a likely quarry, and the gang would do the rest.

A great deal of incriminating evidence was found at Long Jim's apartments, including the complete stock-in-trade of a forger, "fence", and confidence-trickster.

In fact, Long Jim was one of the few "fences" who did not restrict his activities to this one profession; as I said above, this is the exception among "fences".

This last exploit of Long Jim's cost him a three-year sentence, whereas his two accomplices escaped more lightly.

The ingenuity displayed by some receivers of stolen property in carrying their ill-gotten gains right under the very eyes of the law is truly remarkable. I remember, years ago, a man whom we had good reason to suspect of dealing in stolen property, for he was often seen in the company of the light-fingered gentry; yet, though we raided his premises on more than one occasion, we were never successful in our quest. One peculiarity he had; he would often be seen, winter or summer, outside his shop, with his shirt-sleeves tucked up. We were told that he used to hide the stolen property in sweet-tins and the like, but we could never find it. Until, one day, a little bird whispered in the ear of one of my colleagues that a search of the shirt-sleeves might be advisable. This advice was acted on, and, lo and behold, a watch was found; this "kettle" led to his undoing.

Another old "fence" who always laughed at our efforts to catch him was considerably taken aback when we managed to locate his "cache", which lay in a cavity under one of the stair-treads, over which we had often walked when searching his premises.

The "hoisters" (shop-thieves) of St. Luke's and Hoxton had an exceedingly clever woman "fence", who lived just off Nile Street, Hoxton. She eluded our efforts to catch her for a long time; but, one day, I paid an early morning call on her, having "got the tip" that she had several rolls of stolen silk in her house.

As my colleague and I entered her kitchen, we found her apparently just finishing breakfast. She was a big, stout woman; she received us as politely as usual, denying all knowledge of the silk ("squeeze"); we accepted her invitation to search her premises; there was not a sign of what we were looking for. It looked as if we were baffled when, just as I was on the point of leaving, it struck me as curious that she had not attempted to leave her seat all the time we were there. Though I asked her to accompany me outside, she refused to budge from her "throne", from which we eventually had to "depose" her. Alas for her, she had been sitting on her "kingdom," the missing rolls of "squeeze".

CHAPTER VI

SOME "ROUGH HOUSES".

I HAVE recounted, in an earlier chapter, my youthful introduction to "Big Sam" and the desperate struggle I was fated to have with him in later life, a struggle which all too nearly ended fatally for me.

As will easily be imagined, this was far from being the only "scrap" in which I was concerned during my lengthy service under the Yard, as witness the other little affair which I recounted in the chapter on "Receivers".

From a long list of such encounters, I will select a few which may have a certain interest.

I remember a particularly fierce encounter which took place in 1909, when I was a sergeant. At that time, my colleagues and I were on the trail of an expert gang of safe-breakers, who had been specialising in the robbing of post offices, their method being to break in, remove the safe, take it home and examine it at leisure.

We discovered at last that a number of men of the type we were after were living in a house in Rosebery Avenue, Clerkenwell, and I felt pretty certain that, if we heard of any cases of safe-breaking in that neighbourhood, it would be well worth while to make a swift descent on this house.

One night in December, just after I had got into bed, a uniformed constable knocked at the door. "There's been a job at the Goswell Road post office, sir," he reported; "they've stolen the safe."

Grabbing my truncheon, I made for the rendezvous I had previously arranged, in case of need, with a colleague of mine, Sergeant Laing. I found him waiting there. "I

think we've got them this time, Charley," he quietly remarked; "look." He pointed to the steps leading up to the door of the house; they had recently been chipped, as if some heavy object had been dragged up them.

Going round to the back of the house, we climbed a wall, from which post of vantage we could see what was going on. The blinds had not been drawn in the back room, and we could see the gang, every individual member of which was known to us, busily working to open a safe. There were eight of them, and we knew they were all "scrappers".

It seemed a tall order for the two of us to tackle the eight of them. Laing, however, was a very powerful and determined man. On occasion I have seen him seize two criminals and march them off, one under each arm. I was also in the heavyweight class and fighting fit. So we decided to have a go at them.

At the end of the street we found a young uniformed constable, whom we enlisted as a member of the storming party. Him we told to go to the front of the house and wait there until we had had time to get to the back, when he was to knock loudly on the door, draw his truncheon and deal suitably with anybody who emerged.

The plan proved successful. We had just got over the wall when we heard his knock. At once the lights went out, and we dropped over the wall on to the roof of an outhouse; that is to say, I did; Laing, slipping on the icy roof, landed in a bath full of ice-cold water. He picked himself up with a muttered oath, and we made a dash for the back door. The crooks were just filing out of the room when we came to grips with them. Their leader made a rush at Laing, who was just in front of me, but Laing dropped him in his tracks with a powerful blow and then, seizing a jemmy which was lying handy, confronted the rest.

"Keep quiet," he shouted, "anybody who makes a move will get a taste of this." The threat was effective and not a move was made. Thinking, however that there must be

more of them, I asked Laing to hold his little lot in check while I prospected upstairs. I found myself on a landing onto which three doors gave. Choosing the nearest, I opened it and, as I did so, a man rushed out at me, swinging a steel bar. I got to grips with him before he could use it, and we swayed backwards and forwards all over the landing. Getting a jiu-jitsu lock on him, I literally threw him down the stairs, head first. Up floated Laing's matter-of-fact remark "This one's all right, Charley; get on with the rest".

Entering the room, I had a good look round, and saw there was a bed in it. Sticking out from under the blankets were two large feet. Grabbing the bedclothes, I gave a hearty tug and, after a bout of all-in wrestling another passenger was sent down to the ground floor by the direct route. Under the bed was a third man who, however, surrendered unconditionally. He was sent down stairs to join the little party over whom Laing was standing guard with the jemmy.

On trying the next door, I found it locked, and had to burst it open; immediately I entered a man inside jumped out of the window, straight into the arms of the uniformed constable; yet another preferred to surrender quietly.

Reinforcements, summoned by the uniformed constable, now appeared, and we succeeded in carrying off ten men, most of whom were sentenced to penal servitude. Laing and I managed to come out of this little fracas without any "souvenirs", save one very agreeable one, which came to me from the Postmaster-General, in the shape of a handsome gold watch, inscribed "Presented to Detective-Sergeant Leach in recognition of courageous conduct in arresting eight men for the safe robbery at the Goswell Road Post Office—9th December, 1909". The presentation was personally made to Laing and me, at the Yard, in the presence of my chiefs, by the Assistant Commissioner, the late Sir Melville McNaughton.

Sometimes the "rough stuff" has its comic side, as this little interlude will show. It happened in this way: A

certain young couple had invested their last penny in a coffee-house in Hoxton, a district which, as I have already had occasion to remark, was then infested by thieves and other bad characters.

The young couple prospered; but it soon began to be noised abroad that they were in the habit of keeping their takings in their bedroom. I learnt also that they were in the habit of going for a bicycle-ride on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, after shutting up the shop, and, furthermore, that this habit of theirs was well known to certain thieves, who intended to break in next time the young couple went out.

I went to their shop with Detective-Sergeants Laing and Wright and told them what was in the wind, adding that they had no reason to feel alarmed; we were quite capable of dealing with the situation. "Go off on your bikes as usual," I told them, "and don't come back too soon; before you leave, we shall come and hide in your bedroom; so, when the thieves break in, they will get a warm reception."

Though the young man seemed justifiably nervous, he eventually agreed to this proposal, and his wife and he went off for their ride. Laing hid under the bed, I concealed myself behind the door, while Wright was in a recess commanding the stairs. It was not long before our vigil was rewarded by the sound of a creaking stair.

Hastily whispering a warning to Laing, I braced myself to receive the intruder. His steps came nearer, and through the crack of the door, I saw the form of a man on the landing. As he entered the room I pounced on him, seized him by the neck and, not wishing to take any chances, gave his head a couple of hearty bangs against the wall, upon which he dropped to the ground.

Upon a light being struck, we bent down to examine our captive—and were horrorstruck to discover that it was the unfortunate proprietor of the coffee-shop! He proved to be a good sportsman, and took it all in very good part. After we had rendered first aid and pulled him round a bit,

he said "It was all my fault; I thought it just possible you might be thieves yourselves, so I decided to come back and have a look; it was a silly thing to do; anyhow, I can see you will give the thieves a warm reception when they do turn up".

An exciting episode once came my way in the neighbourhood of St. Luke's. A clever gang of warehouse thieves had been particularly successful, in spite of all our efforts to lay them by the heels.

Their system was to watch for days the warehouse on which they had designs, in order to get an accurate knowledge of the time when the employees entered and left the premises, whether there was a watchman employed, how often the police passed and repassed on their beats, and any other information which might prove useful. They devoted special attention to the "monkeys" (padlocks) on the doors; they would obtain replicas of these, to attach to the doors after the original padlocks had been forced and their entrance effected. Directly they had gained an entrance an accomplice would come along and affix the new padlock, thus avoiding any suspicions on the part of the policeman on his beat.

One night we heard that this gang had their eye on a warehouse, the safe in which contained, they thought, a lot of money and other valuables. We laid our plans carefully and kept a strict watch.

Soon we located two of the gang "screwing" (on the look-out), and they were shortly joined by another. At dusk, our look-out man reported that four of the gang had met at the top of the street. Later on, two of these had disappeared, while two were loitering in a side-street. Fearing that, if we waited any longer, we might miss them all, as they possibly had got wind of our plans, we made a dash for these two; one of them managed to escape, but we got his companion.

We then forced an entry into the warehouse with a hammer and chisel, where we found a sack containing

watches and other goods ready for removal. Hearing footsteps upstairs, I went up to prospect, with one of my officers. Just as we gained the top of the stairs, two men dashed out of an office, the leader aiming a wicked blow with a jemmy at my colleague's head. Fortunately he missed and, after a desperate struggle, we succeeded in overpowering him. We did not realise, until we searched the office afterwards what a very narrow escape from death we had had; for the man had actually been engaged in searching the drawers of the desk, one of which contained a fully-loaded, six-chambered revolver.

Meanwhile the other man had run further upstairs, and I pursued him, coming up with him just as he was climbing out on to the roof through a trap-door. For a moment it seemed as if he would turn and close with me; but no, he continued his flight across the roof, with me hard on his heels; so hard, in fact, that I had almost caught him, when he suddenly jumped clean off the roof! I had great difficulty in preserving my balance, and nearly followed him too far.

I made sure he must have been killed, and shouted down to my colleagues. On searching the rear of the premises, however, they found him still alive, and groaning feebly; when he was taken to hospital it was found that the sum total of his injuries was merely some broken ribs and a damaged nose, not enough, in fact, to prevent him joining his friends in penal servitude a few weeks later.

In those days, as I have said, they bred an uncommonly rough type of thief in East and North London, and perhaps it was as well for me that I was always physically fit, making a practice of getting swimming or other physical exercise daily.

One day, or rather night, I was keeping observation in High Street, Islington, with my colleague Pat Hearn when, just as midnight struck, we heard a cry for help coming from the direction of the old Grand Theatre.

Rushing up, we found two men attacking another in a

gateway. They had seized him by the throat and were going through his pockets. Closing with them, we were soon engaged in a desperate struggle, for the man I was attacking was a notorious "tough". Aiming repeated blows at my face, he tried to prevent me from getting to close quarters. Just at that time I was suffering from the effects of a nasty wound in the foot received in the course of duty, and I was consequently physically handicapped and hard put to it to hold my own. I had neither whistle nor truncheon with me, and, in any case, there was little prospect of help in that quarter and at that time of night.

With the strength of desperation, therefore, I bore in again and succeeded in getting a safe hold of my man. In spite of his kicks and struggles I managed to hold on and finally to throw him heavily; in falling his head struck the roadway and he was out of action.

Hearn had by this time also secured his man, and we then had to march the pair off to the City Road station, a distance of at least a mile and a half. Five years' penal servitude was their portion, the judge remarking that we had been instrumental in ridding the public of two dangerous pests.

There was a sequel for, some weeks later, on returning to the City Road station one afternoon, I was told by the officer in charge that there was a man detained in the cells for theft who wished to see me. I went to the cell and, lifting up the trap-door, was astounded to see that the occupant was the young man whom we had rescued from the footpads. He had fallen himself into temptation and had stolen some money from a child in the street. I could do nothing for him this time.

I recall an occasion on which, after many days of patient shadowing, we had lost the men we were following on the very day which they chose to break into a large, semi-detached house at Chiswick. However, we were ultimately able, by dint of patience, to get on their track again, and

we eventually arrested them, but not before another exciting battle had taken place. This is what happened:

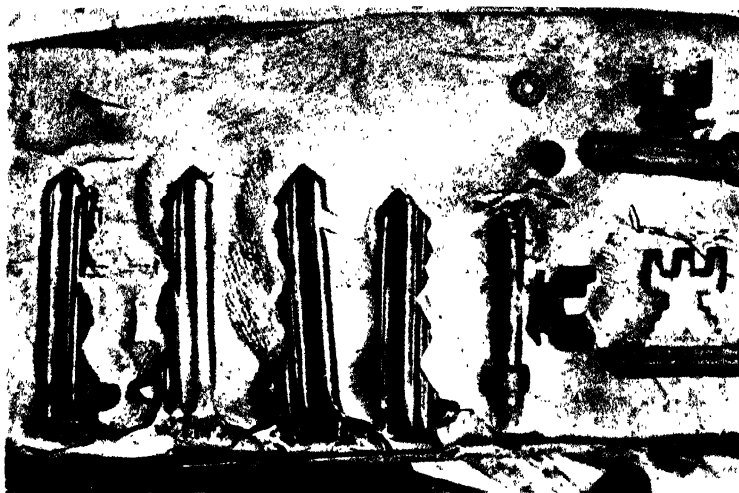
We knew that two notoriously desperate ex-convicts both expert housebreakers, had been watching the residence of a well-known theatrical manager for some time past. The manager usually left home for the theatre, accompanied by his wife, just as it was getting dusk, the sole remaining occupants of the house being a young servant and three children.

The crooks intended to await the departure of the owner of the house, and then effect their entrance by gagging the servant, if she attempted to stop them when she answered the door. We were uncertain, however, which night would be chosen for the attempt.

One day we picked up our suspects in the Caledonian Market and, after a trying time following them among the stalls and in the public-houses, sometimes losing them, but always picking them up again, we finally got them away together on an omnibus. It was too risky, of course, to board the same vehicle, and, though we made use of other buses and ran part of the way, we finally lost them.

Getting into touch with Sergeant, now ex-Divisional Detective-Inspector Hall, of Hammersmith, an experienced and determined officer, I met him with one or two of my officers, and we held a council of war. Taking a careful look round the house marked down for the burglary, we noticed that the adjoining house was empty. We soon obtained permission to enter it from the agent, but could not get into touch with the people in the house which was to be raided, as they were out. There was nothing to do but patiently to await the arrival of the thieves.

We had been so busy all day that we had had no opportunity of getting any food; but one of my officers noticed some nice pears in the garden, some of which he attempted to knock down with an old boot. The pears came down all right, but so did the old boot—on the top of a greenhouse in



THE ART OF THE JEWEL THIEF

Impressions of Keys moulded in Plasticine discovered in a raid on Jewel Throve.
From these impressions the false keys are cut.

A FIBRE-MIXING FEEDER RECEIVED BY THE AUTHOR
FOLLOWING THE ARREST OF SEVERAL YOUTHS FOR
THE CUP-FINAL MURDER

the adjoining garden, smashing the glass roof and narrowly missing an old gentleman's head.

We were of course unaware of this mishap until the door of the room we were in was suddenly burst open by a uniformed constable, who dashed in with upraised truncheon. "Keep still," he cried to us, "unless you want to get a taste of this." Behind him was the old gentleman, very wroth and red in the face. Directly the constable spied Hall, however, a look of amazement came over his face. Explanations and apologies quickly followed, and the old gentleman, learning our errand, sportingly volunteered to assist us.

Night was now approaching, and there had been no signs of our quarry; so I went with two of my officers to have a look round. We rode up and down the road two or three times on trams, when I suddenly spied our men just outside a public-house. I sent my colleagues back to give warning at the house, and waited myself until the burglars decided to make a move themselves in the same direction. Then, jumping on a tram, I passed them and, re-entering our observation post, said to Hall, "Quick, let us hide in the bushes in the garden".

In less than thirty seconds we were all lying flat on the ground among the bushes, with our eyes fixed on the garden gate. It was now dark. We heard the creak of the opening gate and cautious footsteps moving up the path. It seemed to us as if we must be discovered, but the burglars passed us and went straight to the servants' entrance, where one of them knocked. The servant and the children were out, as I have mentioned, which was perhaps just as well.

Not obtaining any answer to their knocks, the burglars brought their jemmies into operation, and, at the same moment, I gave the signal and we dashed forward. We were soon in the thick of a pretty mêlée, and, in the dark, it was a little difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Hall had a narrow squeak when one of the burglars dealt him a terrible blow with a jemmy. Fortunately he was wearing a bowler hat, which took the full force of the blow.

For some time we were all rolling over one another in the bushes, but we finally got the upper hand and marched our captives off to the station. Both culprits, who had terrible records, were sentenced to eight years, as habitual criminals.

Perhaps one of the nastiest forms of attack to which a detective is subject is what used to be known as "chivving"; this denotes the practice of knocking the top off an ordinary tumbler and smashing it on your victim's face. I remember having a very narrow escape from that form of attack one day in a public-house off the Edgware Road, shortly before my recent retirement.

We had been keeping our eyes on a gang from Hoxton, among whom were a number of desperate characters. One was an expert in stealing "spark props" (diamond tie-pins), which he usually removed from the victim's person under cover of a newspaper.

Another member of this gang rejoiced in the sobriquet of the "Policeman", which he had earned by his favourite trick of assuming the rôle of a detective on racecourses. Well-built and commanding in appearance, he used to intervene when any member of his gang happened to be seized by a victim whose pockets he had rifled.

"I'm a police officer," he would say with an important air; "what has this man done?" The unsuspecting victim would of course immediately release the man he was holding; then other members of the gang would close round the "police officer" and the "prisoner" and they would disappear, *en route* for the railway station, but certainly not the police station.

One evening three members of this gang were operating at a bus stop in Tottenham Court Road, and one of them succeeded in stealing a valuable scarf-pin from a Dutch visitor to this country. Curiously enough, another foreign visitor, from the Argentine, actually witnessed the theft, and promptly informed a nearby policeman, but, in the ensuing scuffle, two of the pickpockets got away.

Next day I ascertained that these two men were the "Policeman" and the "spark-prop" expert and, as luck would have it, I spied them a little later on in the Edgware Road. Following them, I saw them to enter a public-house.

Aware of their reputation for violence, I enlisted the assistance of a uniformed constable, and together we dashed into the bar. As we entered, the "Policeman" called to his friend "Look out, here's Leach!"

Turning swiftly to the counter, he picked up a tumbler; but, foreseeing that he intended "chivving" me, I grabbed his arm before he could act, and the tumbler fell to the floor. Had I not been aware of his penchant for this form of attack, I should no doubt have been badly cut. Meanwhile the "spark-prop" expert was also busy trying to "out" me by other methods, but, with the assistance of my uniformed colleague, he was soon quietened, and we marched the two of them off. In view of their previous bad record, both of them received long terms of penal servitude, to be followed by three years' police supervision.

Another little "dust-up" in which I was engaged took place on the Millwall Football Ground, during the actual progress of a match. We found occasion to arrest some members of a gang of pickpockets led by one "Australian Harry". We caught about five of them red-handed, but they showed fight. The man I had singled out threw away a watch as we rolled, locked together, down the embankment. Meanwhile, one of my colleagues was having a terrific struggle with another member of the gang, right in the goalmouth, much to the discomfiture of the players.

As we were removing our captives from the ground, they started to show fight again, and I had to call upon a soldier in the crowd to assist us "in the King's name". This he readily agreed to do and, whipping off his belt, put it to such good use that the gang soon quietened down.

On one occasion, during my travels round London, I had located a gang of international thieves living in Maida Vale.

These men, who were Russians, were reported to be pretty desperate characters and were supposed to be in possession of firearms.

Orders had been issued for their deportation from this country and, under the direction of the late Chief-Inspector Ward, a raid was to be carried out and their arrest effected. I well remember that morning; suspecting that our suspects were armed, we decided that it would be best to protect ourselves in the same way. We were not anxious for a repetition of the Sidney Street affair.

Approaching the door of the house where the Russians lived, I happened to glance round and was surprised and alarmed to see, almost touching my ribs, the barrel of a nasty-looking automatic. My colleague, who was carrying this, seemed to think that it was a good thing to signal with, and was using the "business end" of it to attract my attention. Deeming discretion the better part of valour, I politely stepped out of the way and suggested that he should assume command of the operations.

Fortunately, our fears regarding the reception we were likely to meet with from the Russians proved to be groundless, for we were able to secure an easy entrance and to catch them entirely off their guard. Two of them were, in fact, in bed. They were too surprised to show fight, and we were able to rid the country of a desperate gang of scoundrels.

It is extraordinary how thieves have a habit of falling in your path on more than one occasion. Years ago, at Hoxton, I actually arrested the same thief, a very clever exponent of his art, on three separate occasions. His wife was also a thief, being a "hoister" (shoplifter) of parts; her greedy fingers were fatally attracted by the alluring display of goods on the counters of the large stores. This little weakness is often called kleptomania when ladies of hitherto blameless character and unimpeachable social standing conceive a penchant for it.

On the two previous occasions, when I had arrested this

woman's husband, I had to search their rooms, but found nothing of interest there; they were too clever for that. On the third occasion I went there late in the evening; her ladyship was out, but returned just as I was leaving. She had heard that her husband had once again been arrested by me earlier in the day, and she had been expecting my visit all the afternoon. She expressed extreme disappointment at my not having called before since, as she kindly informed me, she had been patiently waiting with a pail of boiling water, all ready as she phrased it "to pour over your . . . head as soon as your ugly . . . mug appeared at the foot of the stairs".

One notorious thief in the St. Luke's district was known to his intimates as "Waxy"; at the time I am speaking of "Waxy" had just "returned home" (been released on ticket of leave) from a "lagging" (sentence of penal servitude). He was a man of hasty temper and inclined to resent the attentions of the police when caught in some nefarious act; so much so that, in the past, his head had more than once come into contact with a truncheon, of which he now appeared to stand in considerable dread. "Waxy," like others out on ticket-of-leave, had to be visited from time to time, to see that he was residing at his proper address which, in this case, was a "kip" (lodging-house). I called at this place one evening, but he was not there.

The fact that I had called evidently annoyed him, and he uttered threats of what he would do to me when next we met; this was reported to me by one of his intimates. "Guv'nor," this man said, "Waxy is looking for you; he's got a razor and may slash you." Not wanting my personal beauty to be disfigured thus early in my career, I decided that the best thing was to go out and look for "Waxy" and not wait until trouble came to me.

Hearing, a few evenings later, that he had been seen in a nearby street, I went off there, expecting to meet him alone; so I was not best pleased to find him accompanied by three other tough-looking individuals, all of whom were well

known to me as hard "cases". This, of course, was just as well, for a knowledge of the men with whom he has to deal forms one of the greatest protections to a detective; not only is he aware of the particular method of attack favoured by the individuals in question (razors, boots, fisticuffs, etc.), but he can always pick them up again another day.

However, it was no good showing the white feather, so I went boldly up to "Waxy", taking the precaution of pulling out my truncheon and strapping it firmly round my wrist. I watched him closely, but he made no movement. Perhaps it was the sight of the weapon he had come to fear that cooled his ardour. Anyway, neither he nor his comrades made any move, and when I said "I want you, 'Waxy'", he followed like a lamb; and, in the subsequent conversation, he actually apologised for the rude things he had said about me! He assured me, further, that he had always held me in the greatest respect, and that I should be the last person in the world whom he would dream of harming. These were no idle words, moreover, for we actually became good friends afterwards, and he did me one or two useful turns.

I had a narrow escape during the summer of 1914, in Hyde Park, a spot which the police were then keeping a sharp eye on, since it was frequented not only by pick-pockets but also by numerous male degenerates, few of them, I am glad to say, of British nationality, into whose infamous profession it is not necessary to enter in detail.

With my colleague Detective-Sergeant (now Divisional Detective-Inspector) Lawrence, I was keeping a careful watch on the crowds collected near the Marble Arch, when I caught sight of one of these despicable beings. He was so occupied in importuning various persons of his own sex that we were able to swoop down on him and arrest him. In fact, he made no resistance at the time, and we marched him off, I holding him by one wrist and my colleague by the other. Hyde Park police station was only about two hundred yards away, but the path was not well lighted, and there were very few people about at the time.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning our prisoner lashed out violently with his foot, catching me a nasty kick on the leg; at the same time he wrenched his right hand out of my grip, and plunged it into his hip pocket. Shouting to Lawrence to take care, I managed to grab his wrist again just as he was in the act of drawing a heavy automatic from his pocket. A frantic struggle ensued, the prisoner kicking out right and left and trying all he could to bring the weapon into action; in the end, we managed to master him and took him along to the station. On examining the weapon, we found it to be fully loaded; we had had a narrow escape.

The prisoner turned out to be a German, who posed as a Baron, and had already been deported once for blackmail. Like so many others, he had managed to find his way back again. He evidently had not intended to be arrested again, if a free use of his gun could have prevented it. The sentence he received kept him in internment until the cessation of hostilities, when he was once more deported and, it is to be hoped, will not again return.

There are times, as will be appreciated, when the police would gain a feeling of security were they armed; but, for the reasons pointed out in my introductory chapter, this would be an innovation with which I should not personally be in sympathy.

From the foregoing, it will have been gathered that the life of a detective possesses at least the interest of a certain variety. One can never be certain how any particular "cop" is going to pan out. Some criminals go quietly to the station, others like to have a last fling, and an efficient officer has to be prepared for all eventualities.

Too much insistence cannot be laid on the fact that the tales which circulate from time to time about the "brutal" manner in which policemen and detectives handle their captures rest on no solid basis of fact. As a matter of fact, the average "flattie" or "busy" is a kindly individual, who treats his prisoners with every consideration. The gener-

osity of the Yard officers is a by-word in many a poor street.

However, if our opponents chose to "mix it", we were usually able to gratify their desire, and able to give rather better than we got. In a few cases, of course, when dealing with notoriously desperate characters, we had to take the initiative.

In fact, to quote from the well-known couplet, though we were "blessed" since we knew our cause was just, there were several occasions on which it behoved us to become doubly so by getting our "blow in fust". Otherwise one was likely to make unpleasant acquaintance with the business end of a jemmy or, equally dangerous, a vicious kick from a well-aimed boot.

I have referred to the fact that it was not always that I carried a truncheon; in fact to do so was rather the exception for me. Nevertheless, there have been occasions on which the presence of this handy little weapon afforded me a considerable amount of moral comfort. The C.I.D. truncheon is not quite so long as that of the uniformed constable, but it is a solid affair, made of teak, and quite as effective. Provided with a strap to pass round the wrist, it can be readily secreted up one's sleeve and brought into action at the crucial moment with deadly effect.

On the whole, when the "scrap" is over, it is but rare that a grudge is borne by either party, even when they have been rather seriously knocked about, as is instanced by what I had to tell of my fight with "Long Ted" in the receiver's shop and of his subsequent apologies for "troubling me".

It takes all sorts to make a world, and your criminal generally recognises that a detective has his job to do, the same as anybody else, unpleasant though it may be at times.

CHAPTER VII

THE "WHIZZ MOB"—'BUS AS "BLACK MARIA"—A SENSATION AT ASCOT
—"DRAGGERS" AND WAREHOUSE THIEVES.

AMONG the various classes of criminals with which a detective has to deal, in the course of his duties, none of them are a source of greater trouble than pickpockets. Many is the hour I have spent trailing these light-fingered gentry. They usually operate in gangs, or "mobs", sometimes numbering as many as ten to fifteen individuals, and their happy hunting grounds are generally railway stations, bus stops, sales, football and boxing matches, race-tracks, cinemas, theatres and restaurants.

The gangs consist of "pushers-up", the men who push their victim up against the actual thief in order to facilitate his task, "lookers-out", those who keep a careful watch for possible police intervention, the men who do the actual "relieving" (stealing), and the "carriers", who convey the stolen property to the "fences" (receivers).

Now, the task of shadowing pickpockets is far from being an easy one, for they are constantly on the *qui vive*, from the time they leave their lair until they reach the scene of their operations. The favourite meeting-places of the gangs are the bars of public-houses or small cafés, and there their plans are laid regarding the particular functions which are to become the next scene of their unwelcome attentions; they take care to depart singly, or in twos or threes, in order to avoid arousing suspicion.

There was an occasion on which I effected the capture of one of the most notorious of these gangs, hailing from Hoxton, under circumstances that were dramatic in the extreme. I found that these men were making a practice

of "working" the bus stopping places, and I wondered what would be the best means of keeping them under surveillance without revealing our own presence.

Eventually I decided to borrow a van from a firm of contractors; the name of the firm was, of course, boldly displayed on the canvas covering. Three of my men and I concealed ourselves inside the van, which then began to patrol the neighbourhood frequented by the gang.

This went on for some days, when, one morning, we were rewarded by seeing several of the pickpockets walking towards the Angel, Islington, all smartly attired and carrying gloves and umbrellas. Arrived at the Angel, they boarded different omnibuses, but eventually all congregated at St. Pancras Church. They were obviously on the look-out for victims, but miles from having any suspicions of the harmless-looking delivery van drawn up on the opposite side of the road.

Through a slit in the canvas covering of the van, we kept a close watch on their movements; presently a suitable victim came along, in the person of an Egyptian medical student, who was wearing a valuable gold watch and chain. The gang soon spotted him and, directly he boarded a bus, they proceeded to get to work.

One of their number pushed into the bus in front of the Egyptian, while those behind pushed him forward, so that the "reliever" was given a good opportunity to "fan" (search) his victim, which was rapidly and scientifically done. By this time the whole gang had pushed right inside the bus.

It was time to act. My colleagues and I left our hiding-place in the van and completely blocked the doorway of the bus; the odds against us were nine to four, but it was too good a haul to worry about that, and I told the driver to whip up and, neglecting his ordinary route, proceed straight to Hunter Street police station, which was close by. He was naturally somewhat astonished at receiving this peremptory and unusual command, but soon tumbled to the situation, into which he entered with great enthusiasm.

During the short journey to the police station, we were busy securing the pickpockets inside the bus, which we managed after a sharp struggle, and it was not long before we had them all safely under lock and key.

This is, so far as I am aware, the first and only occasion that a London bus has been commandeered and used as a "Black Maria!"

A favourite side-line of certain gangs of pickpockets is what is known as "working the jug" (banks). Gangs of four men are usually engaged on this. For some days previous to the coup a carefully-selected bank will be watched, usually towards the end of the week, when messengers are likely to be sent with pay-cheques.

One of the gang follows the messenger into the bank, in order to learn where he places the money drawn; this is usually in an inside jacket pocket or, in the case of woman messengers, in a bag or attaché case. The "inside man" then passes the information he has gleaned on to his confederates outside, and the messenger, as he or she is leaving the bank, is hustled and relieved of the money.

There were two men, known as the "Black Prince" and "K-legs," who were specially expert at this type of crime. On one occasion we followed "K-legs" and three other pickpockets to a bank in Oxford Street. They had been seen watching this bank some days before, and we guessed that they were out for business.

Keeping them under observation for some time, we eventually saw the "spotter" come out of the bank immediately behind a young man who had just cashed a cheque. As the gangsters surrounded their victim, we dashed out from our hiding-place; in the ensuing scrap, I managed to get hold of "K-legs," who was a huge fellow, with one hand and a smaller member of the gang with the other. Soon I felt the bigger man gradually slipping from my grasp; as he finally broke away, I made a despairing grab at his head, but all I could seize was his bowler hat! So I was left with one prisoner and one untenanted billy-

cock. However, we managed to find the owner next day in the East End.

For many years I was detailed for duty on Epsom race-course, and this has many memories for me, since naturally it is a place where pickpockets abound. One of the worst scraps I ever had there was on a Derby Day, some years ago. Pickpockets had been particularly active among the dense masses of people in the rings and stands, and it was exceedingly difficult to keep track of the men we wanted.

All of a sudden I caught sight of four of the "Three Nuns" gang, all well dressed, typical race-goers in appearance, pushing about among the crowd. It was not long before I saw one of them place himself in front of a middle-aged man, whom the rest of the pickpockets pushed against their colleague in front. The latter had just got his hand on the gentleman's gold chain when I seized him. In a moment the whole gang were attacking me.

Meanwhile my prisoner was fighting like a demon, but I hung on to him, and eventually we both fell to the ground, where I received further unpleasant attentions from the boots of his colleagues. Help arrived in the nick of time, when I was almost exhausted; but, while I had been able to hold on to the man I had seized, his companions had disappeared.

I was black and blue all over as a result of this encounter, and it was some weeks before the effects of the fight wore off.

Another well-known rendezvous for pickpockets and other light-fingered gentry was Barnet Fair. Each year a special staff of detectives had to be detailed for duty there. Some of the horse-dealers used to carry large sums of money about them, and many well-known people used to attend the Fair.

I remember once being detailed for duty there; after reporting at Barnet Police Station, I was looking for lodgings, when I heard someone call out "Hullo, gov'nor"; it was a well-known thief, who rejoiced in the sobriquet of "Holy Joe".

At the time in question, things were not going well with him, and, on promise of good behaviour, I engaged him to act as "batman" to my colleagues and myself during our stay there. He used to clean our boots and run errands, in return for which services we fed him well and gave him a little pocket-money. He was very happy with us, and he rewarded our kindness to him in a very practical manner.

One evening I was walking down Barnet Hill, when Joe popped out from behind a hedge. "Guv'nor," he whispered with a confidential air, "there's a 'whizz mob' (gang of pickpockets) working down by the whelk stall at the bottom of the hill." I collected a few of my colleagues and we followed Joe. From our hiding-place we watched the gang at work. Suddenly we rushed them, and a pitched battle took place, which resulted in the whelk-stall being knocked completely over and the combatants being liberally decorated with whelks and their concomitants.

After securing our captives, we picked the crustacea off our persons and returned home.

Next morning Joe rushed up to me in great excitement. "Guv'nor," he said, "the 'diddikayes' are 'ramping' a 'tit' in the 'spruce'." By which cryptic words he meant to convey the information that some gypsies had got a stolen horse in a field, where they were changing the colour of its coat. So they were gathered in.

Joe's information continued to be A.1, and the following evening, when I met him as I was returning to my lodgings, he called my attention to a nearby hedge, behind which, he averred "they're three-handed with a kettle" (three persons with a stolen watch). Investigation proved the truth of his words, and three more men went to swell the list of our captures.

Joe had indeed repaid our temporary assistance with interest, and we received high commendation from the Barnet Justices for our work on this occasion.

On one occasion I set a trap which, but for one of those unexpected and unforeseen miscalculations which so often

wreck the best-laid plans, would have resulted in a rare haul of pickpockets.

It was on the occasion of a big football match, and crowded trains were conveying the supporters of the rival teams to the ground; we were well aware that the pickpockets would not neglect such an excellent opportunity for profitable business, and we were not without hope of landing two or three particularly successful gangs on whose trail we had been for some time.

Accordingly, we arranged with the railway authorities that the train should be held back at a certain station when my men and I, after previously donning the uniform of station-masters and porters, would go through the train and make the necessary arrests. Everything went well up to a point and we noticed at least thirty or forty well-known pickpockets among the crowds boarding the train.

However, just as I was about to give the signal to act, the train, which I supposed would have been held back in conformity with our pre-arranged plan, began to leave the station, the guard, who had not been informed of what was afoot, having given the driver the "right away".

We rushed forward, but too late; several gangsters were watching us in amazement and, several days later, when I happened to arrest some of these elsewhere, one of them said "You made a fine station-master, guv'nor".

One of the most exciting arrests I ever effected was made at Royal Ascot; and it might have been fraught with very serious consequences, not only to ourselves and our captives, but also to the jockeys engaged in the principal race of the day.

How well I remember the scene; densely-packed crowds, a broiling hot day, rank and fashion in the stands, book-makers shouting on the rails, and all the thousand and one things which go to make Royal Ascot an unforgettable and unparalleled spectacle.

For half an hour I had been carefully following the

movements of a stockily-built East-ender, whose eyes seemed to be everywhere; my colleague and I had had the greatest difficulty in keeping him in view, as he glided in and out of the crowds with the sinuous movements of a serpent. *

There was no mistaking his profession; he was a pick-pocket, pure and simple; he was obviously working single-handed, an unusual thing for a gentleman of his calling. We had to follow him unobtrusively and with the utmost caution, for there is no thief so wary and so readily scared as your pickpocket; he takes alarm on the least possible provocation.

Twice he nearly succeeded in "lifting" a watch, but, not despairing, after waiting on the fringe of a crowd for a few minutes, he again pushed his way in and, quick as lightning, placed himself in front of a portly gentleman, whose jacket was wide open and displayed, across a vast expanse of waistcoat, a beautiful bit of "red tackle" (gold watch-chain) which, it is safe to assume, had at the end of it a valuable "red kettle" (gold watch).

Wedged in with the crowd, the pickpocket managed to get into the required position; sidling alongside his victim, he was just "lifting" the "kettle", when we pounced on him. The crowd scattered in all directions; after a considerable rough-and-tumble, we seized the man by both his wrists, and started to escort him across the course. All the fight seemed to have been knocked out of him; suddenly, about half-way across the course, he "cut up rough" again and nearly succeeded in breaking away from us.

As we were struggling to regain mastery over him, there was a warning shout, and some uniformed police came rushing up to our aid, just in time; for, looking up the course, I was horrified to see that the horses in the big race were thundering down on us! Just in time, we half-dragged, half-carried our captive to safety; the shouts of the multitude were ringing in our ears; I had time to

reflect that I should have been the most unpopular man in England that day, had we not been able to get the refractory one away in time. It was, as I said, the big race of the day, one of the most valuable prizes in racing—and the favourite had been heavily backed!

I remember being sent for on one occasion by the late Superintendent Froest. "Leach," he said, "there are one or two smart young fellows just come into the Yard. I want you to take them in hand and," he added, with that well-known twinkle in his eye, "break them in."

I inspected the new-comers, and I must say that they at once took my eye. Three smart, intelligent, keen-looking young fellows. One of the first jobs I put them on was following some burglars whose haunts were just off the Caledonian Road in North London.

For a few days they followed their men very cleverly, but never caught them actually committing a crime. One evening, as I returned to the Yard, I received a message to the effect that one of the youngsters had been set upon by some of the men he had been following, and was badly kicked about the head. My men had put up a good fight, but had been overcome by desperate "toughs", and one of them was in a bad state.

Other officers and I at once repaired to the neighbourhood, and a comb-out resulted in the miscreants being arrested and receiving a long and well-deserved sentence of penal servitude. The youngster who had been kicked never really recovered from his injuries, and was eventually forced to retire from the Service, thus cutting short a promising career.

A few weeks later, while at the Yard one morning, I asked one of my "pupils": "Any special Society functions on to-day in the neighbourhood?" He told me that the Marquess of Anglesey was to be married at St. Peter's, Eaton Square. "We'll take a run along there," I said, "you may find some pickpockets at work." There was a big crowd outside the church, so we separated, and I

watched from a distance the movements of the people on the outskirts of the crowd.

We had been there but a few minutes when I saw two men detach themselves from the crowd and hasten away together. I immediately recognised them as two very clever pickpockets from the "Angel Mob". Beckoning to my colleague, I told him to keep them in view; pulling my hat well over my eyes, I followed as closely as possible. However, their roving glance detected us before long, and they broke into a run; we gave chase and I succeeded in catching up with one of them after some 200 yards. As I approached him, he aimed a blow at the point of my jaw.

Fortunately, this did not "connect" properly, but, landing on the middle of my throat, it nearly knocked me out. More blows followed and realising that I was no match for him at fisticuffs, I bored in and, with my favourite break-back hold, swung him to the ground. There the struggle went on; he tore at my face, shirt and collar, kicked and struggled until finally I seized his head and gave it a good bang on the road. That settled him. I noticed him trying to put his hand in his jacket pocket, where I afterwards found an exceedingly valuable gold hunter watch, which he had just stolen from a gentleman in the crowd.

By this time all the fight was out of him, and I landed him right-side up again, feeling pretty "groggy" myself. As I did so, I looked round for my worthy pupil. He soon appeared at the corner of the street, dragging after him another pickpocket. Both looked considerably the worse for wear; my pupil sported a black eye and a cut lip; his captive, however, was in more parlous state and very docile.

It appears that they finished their fight in a dairy, where the pickpocket had taken refuge, much to the dismay of the proprietor of the shop, who had ample cause to cry over spilt milk and broken eggs!

After taking the captives to a local station, where they were duly charged, we returned to the Yard, where I was sent for by my Chief. I had no time to remove the stains of battle. The Chief, after taking a good look at me and at my pupil, remarked "You are certainly breaking them in, Leach".

It turned out afterwards that the pickpocket I arrested was an ex-professional pugilist, and I had good reason not to doubt the fact!

Another class of crime which was very prevalent in the days when I was attached to the Hoxton and St. Luke's district was thieving from vans. In some cases, the horse and van, in addition to the contents, were stolen.

The depredations of the "draggers", as these thieves were known, were getting serious, and I set to work to check their activities. To this end I borrowed a horse and van belonging to a well-known contractor, and filled it with parcels and packing-cases, leaving one parcel partially exposed on the tailboard. This decoy parcel had attached to it a length of rope, one end of which was held by me, or by one of my colleagues hidden behind the packing-cases in the van. In addition the tarpaulin sheets hanging over the back of the van screened us from view.

One afternoon we were quietly trotting along in our van, and had just turned out of the City Road into a side street, when I noticed that the sheets were loose, and, as they flapped about, they gave any potential "dragger" an opportunity of seeing into the interior of the van. In order to prevent our little stratagem from being discovered, I went to the back of the van and had just tied the tail sheets together when there was a movement on the tailboard, and a hand appeared through the sheets, clutching a wicked-looking knife and slashing at the rope holding the sheets together.

Directly the rope was cut, another man grabbed at the decoy parcel. I jumped out, right on top of the man with

the knife, while my colleague managed to secure the confederate who had taken the parcel. Both men were too surprised to offer much resistance.

One evening, when we were out on our rounds, an amusing thing happened. We had been patiently trotting round the streets for hours, with our bait temptingly displayed. At last, a solitary "dragger," waiting at the corner of a street, made a dash for the van and seized the decoy parcel, which he placed on his shoulder. He walked quietly away, taking no notice of the piece of rope, about ten feet long, which was attached to the parcel and which trailed behind him. Jumping out of the van, I caught hold of the rope and gave it a jerk, which caused the "dragger" to measure his length in the road. He was promptly arrested.

Since he had been caught red-handed, we were somewhat astonished when, at his trial, he pleaded "Not Guilty".

"I don't call it fair, my Lord," he protested to the Judge, "to catch anyone that way. The detectives had a long piece of rope tied to the parcel, so how could I pinch it?" Needless to say, there was loud laughter in Court, and I think that even the Judge must have been touched by the humour of the situation, for the prisoner got off with a comparatively light sentence.

In the district round Golden Lane, Old Street, and City Road, there used to be numerous warehouses well stocked with valuable goods of every description, such as furs, known to the criminal fraternity as "pussies," silk ("squeeze"), ostrich feathers, velvets and the like, all promising material for "screwsmen". There were plenty of "fences" in the district ready to buy the stuff, which they found it easy to dispose of.

The favourite time for the thieves to operate was during the week-end, and it was not an uncommon thing for half a dozen warehouses to be broken into during a single week-end.

Sometimes the thieves would hide themselves on the premises as the employees were leaving; this was not a difficult thing to do, as few of these warehouses had night-watchmen. Once inside, the thieves would work through the night until about six a.m., when they would swiftly load their booty into a waiting van and disappear.

One of the cleverest and most daring warehouse raids I remember took place at a large factory where considerable quantities of valuable leather and other goods were stored. There was also a large safe on the premises, and this was known to contain large sums of money.

As usual, the gang had kept careful observation on this factory for some weeks previous to the date fixed for the robbery, so as to get a general idea of the lie of the land; they checked the times at which the employees entered and left the factory, and also took careful note of the movements of the police coming on and off duty, so that they were finally able to work out, almost to seconds, the time in which they had to operate. They had also carefully studied the "monkey" (padlock) on the front door, and obtained a perfect replica of this.

When their preparations for the raid were complete, one of the gang secreted himself on the premises, as the employees were leaving. Later in the evening the padlock was forced by a confederate from outside; then the man inside came to the door, dressed in overalls, like a warehouseman. At the same time a van drove up, and six other men in overalls jumped out, one of them carrying a large canvas bag, and were admitted by their accomplice.

A duplicate padlock which they had brought with them was then carefully fitted into place by the driver of the van; after which, he drove away, leaving his confederates in charge of the building. From the outside, therefore, there was nothing whatever to show that a burglarious entrance had been effected.

In the canvas bag which the thieves had brought with them was a fine set of safe-breaking tools.

The men, who had all the night before them in which to work, soon got busy on the safe; before morning came, they had forced it and abstracted the contents. In addition, several sacks containing leather and boots were planted near the door, ready for the moment when the van-driver should return.

Now, the gap between success and ignominious failure is not any greater in crime than in any other human activity, and the thieves would, no doubt, have made a successful getaway with a rich booty, had it not been for a word whispered to a colleague of mine by a "snout" (informer).

This particular "snout" was not too reliable; he had had us out of bed on wild-goose chases before. Still, if one is not willing to take chances, one does not accomplish much; so I made a hasty toilet, seized my truncheon, and dashed round to the house of my chief, the late Detective-Inspector Kyd.

We managed to find a belated hansom-cab in which we drove to the local police-station in search of reinforcements. Having obtained these, we proceeded to the scene of action, finding that the only place from which we could watch, without being seen by the burglars, was in a baker's shop, where we spent the rest of the night.

Six o'clock in the morning came, and we were all ready for action. We saw the policeman going off night duty pass by in the deserted street outside. He examined the padlock, but, finding it apparently in order, went on his way. A quarter of an hour later, the policeman coming on early duty passed by; he also examined the padlock and passed on.

Hardly had he disappeared when a van drove up to the door of the factory. A figure in overalls jumped out in a flash, and moving swiftly to the door, forced the padlock with a jemmy, at the same time giving a low whistle. At this signal the doors were thrown open from the inside, and several men in overalls emerged, carrying sacks which they placed in the van.

on the ground, when I heard a shout. Looking round, I saw that the driver of the van had got into his seat and was driving straight at us. Just as it seemed that we must be run over, one of my colleagues pluckily seized the reins and brought the horse to a standstill, despite the fact that the driver was raining blows on him with his whip.

After a desperate struggle, we managed to secure the whole of the gang and their booty.

I have several times insisted, in the course of these reminiscences, how important it is for a detective, when shadowing a criminal, not to let the latter "get the dairy on him" (notice what he is doing) by approaching too close or otherwise advertising his presence and mission.

Still, the most experienced of us get bitten this way on occasion, as the following episode will show.

For a whole week we had followed a man for sixteen or eighteen hours a day; he was a clever burglar, who relied on false keys, and not jemmys, to obtain entry to the premises he intended to burgle.

This man I had once arrested on a Sunday morning "down the Nile" (in Nile Street, Hoxton). He was at the time a convict out on licence, and it was for a breach of this that I took him. I had been able to identify him by a peculiar scar on his nose, caused by a blow from a fellow-criminal in one of those encounters when thieves fall out. "You've got a — fine sauce, coming for me single-handed," he said; "if I were to cut up rough, you'd be outed."

I was able to persuade him that he would gain nothing by resistance, other than possibly a painful reminder of the aggression and an increased sentence; so, realising that discretion was the better part of valour, he agreed to accompany me quietly.

When he emerged again from his enforced retirement,

it was our duty to follow his movements for a time. For this purpose we assumed disguises, and eventually discovered that he was living in a lodging-house in Old Street, St. Luke's. He would come out every day about noon, have one or two drinks, and then board a bus or tram for the suburbs; all the time we were following him, however, he never acted suspiciously nor did he attempt to break into a house or other premises. Coming back to Old Street, he would have a few more drinks, and so to bed. By getting into the good graces of the keeper of the "kip" (lodging-house), we were able to watch the crook, every night, from a point of vantage, safely tucked up and apparently asleep.

This had been going on for about a week without result, and we had received instructions to discontinue the observation on the following Saturday night, if nothing had transpired by then. On Saturday the crook took a long ride out to Muswell Hill, where he went for a stroll, with us on his heels. It was midnight by the time we had seen him home and safely in bed; an hour later, disappointed at not having obtained any result, but thankful that our weary vigil was over, we returned home, tired, dirty and unshaven.

You may imagine that we were not too pleased to learn the very next morning that, scarcely an hour after our departure the previous night, the crook had risen from his bed, and gone on the warpath. Fortunately, however, in the midst of his carefully-planned coup, he was surprised by a uniformed policeman, while he was in the act of breaking into a house, with a sack tied round his neck, to receive the loot, and a large bunch of false keys in his possession.

When I saw him at the police-station, he remarked "Did you enjoy those 'bus rides last week, guv'nor? I did."

He had evidently tumbled us from the beginning!

CHAPTER VIII

SOME LITTLE GAMBLES, "WEST" AND "EAST".

"JUST a little flutter"—from time immemorial it has been the lure.

One of these little flutters was responsible for the deportation of perhaps the greatest jockey of all time—the inimitable Tod Sloan. Tod, the artist, who introduced the famous "crouch" to this country, who heard the plaudits of multitudes din in his ears as he won "classic" after "classic"; Tod, through whose hands fortune after fortune drained away, until, finally, there came the day when he found penury staring him in the face.

Once in his heyday in Paris, Tod had shown himself mad on all forms of cards; then, however, it had been he who had played and lost. Now, in the time of his ill fortune, he would set up, in London, a gambling den for himself. This he did, and young fellows, attracted by the glamour of his name, were easily induced to take a hand in the parties made up by the ex-jockey.

They lost, and lost steadily. Tod, in company with a smart French lady friend, had found the geese that laid the golden eggs. But he went too far. How was he to guess, with his overweening vanity, that he was but the tool of the well-dressed, prosperous-looking clique who were apparently "financing" him. He had about two months' run, and then the fatal *dénouement* arrived. Some of the many victims who had lost over his hospitable green cloth felt themselves aggrieved, and conceived it to be their duty to write to the authorities.

Under the Defence of the Realm Act the authorities had wide discretionary powers. Tod was known to be an undesirable person, living on his wits, and associating with people whose company was the most damning evidence against himself.

An order was issued by the Home Office for his expulsion from England and that of his fair companion. I visited the flat one day with the late Chief-Inspector Ward, and took Tod away, with his actress friend.

As an example of the little man's incurable vanity, it may be mentioned that his last words to the detective who accompanied him on board the Atlantic liner, on which he was leaving these shores, were "Whatever you say, don't forget I travelled saloon". I well remember the final scene at Euston Station. A well-known American gambler, who afterwards received a sentence of imprisonment in connection with the fleecing of a big financier's son and was subsequently expelled from the country, and the manager of a famous grill in the Strand were the last two staunch friends to see the little man off. The gambler lifted Tod up in his arms, as if he were a baby, and hugged him farewell. Such is fame!

For, though he was ostensibly travelling as the guest of the British Government who, under such circumstances, are not in the habit of paying for saloon passages, Tod had actually, owing to the generosity of the few friends who had stuck by him through fair weather and foul, been enabled to pay the difference between his third-class "Government Warrant" and the first-class fare. So he brazened it out to the bitter end.

In the "Naughty 'Nineties", and even later, when the "proms." of the old Empire and Alhambra were in the height of their glory, they were the rendezvous of some of the leading brains among the cardsharping fraternity. For, in those days, big games were run nightly, especially chemin-de-fer, baccarat and roulette, different games, but with a strong family likeness—a distinct element of crookedness.

An important factor in their success was the employment of suitable decoys—men and women in immaculate evening dress, owning magnificent equipages or cars, and with liveried servants in attendance; these people made a point of frequenting the “proms.,” which were the meeting-place for young blades and travellers from the world over.

Night clubs were then just beginning to spring up in the West End, more particularly in the area round Leicester Square and Soho, and a visit to one of these—for they were mostly of questionable character—would reduce the intended “pigeon” to a suitable state of oblivion, in which he was only too easily led off to some flat at which a “game” was probably already in progress.

Arrived there, a few more drinks did the rest, and, in all probability, the victim saw more than one “shoe” on the table at which he was playing. It was therefore an easy matter for the experienced sharpers to “pack” or “stack” the shoe, so that their confederates knew exactly what card was coming out, and could bet accordingly.

It was, however, an exceedingly difficult matter to obtain sufficient evidence to justify raiding these places, although we were aware, from complaints which flowed in from victims, that gaming was taking place. Still, I was eventually able to assist in certain raids which had the effect of putting almost a complete stop to *chemin-de-fer* on a large scale in London. This drove the gamblers to take rooms in hotels and flats for one day only; but, in the end, we were also able to checkmate this move; and, at the time of writing, I doubt very much whether more than a very few, if any, of these haunts exist.

The raid which I shall now describe has an added interest in the fact that it disclosed the existence of a secret formula or code which was used in conjunction with the “packing” of the shoe.

The place we were to raid was situated in the West End, and the first difficulty which confronted us was that of obtaining an entrance. We managed to ascertain that

the clients who used the house obtained the "open sesame" by a certain number of rings on a push-bell. It fell to me to obtain entrance on the night chosen for the raid. The premises consisted of a number of flats, and the outside door was of course shut.

Immaculately attired in evening dress I drove up to the street door, while, a few yards away, my Chief and several other officers were anxiously waiting, ready to make a dash for the door once I had obtained an entrance.

It was in the early hours of the morning, and there were, I found, bells on each side of the entrance. I tried two of these without success and was getting restive when I decided to try a bell on the other side. On pressing this the required number of times, the door was immediately opened by a manservant, to whom I handed my hat and gloves. As he was helping me off with my coat I seized him and passed him over to one of my colleagues who had by now reached the door.

I mounted the stairs until, on one of the top floors, I was cordially greeted by the unsuspecting proprietor of the gaming house. He took me into a room where the "game" was in full progress. A crowd of fashionably dressed men and women were gathered around the tables.

Needless to say, the raid, a complete surprise, was quite successful, and the proprietor of the den was ultimately sent to prison. Many Army officers, on leave from the trenches, used to frequent this flat, and they had in many cases lost heavily.

Some time after this raid, I met, when with my Chief, one of the men who had been in the employ of the proprietor of the gaming-house, and he openly confessed to us that he had to "pack the shoe" from time to time, so that certain players in the game knew just when to bet. He explained that the pack of cards was so arranged that, once it had been dropped into the shoe at a moment when the attention of the majority of the players was distracted, those who, being in league with

the proprietor, were "in the know", could wager large sums with impunity and win heavily.

The secret formula or code was as follows :—

"EIGHT KINGS THREATENED TO SAVE NINE FINE LADIES FROM ONE SICK KNAVE,"

the key being:—

EIGHT KINGS THREATENED TO SAVE NINE FINE							
8	King	3	10	2	7	9	5
LADIES FROM ONE SICK KNAVE							
Queen	4	1	6	Jack.			

It may be that some of my readers have taken part in such "games" in the past; if so, they will now readily understand why they did not get up winners!

Marked cards are, of course, the main stock-in-trade of the sharper. There are many ways in which the cards can be marked, and this must naturally be done in such a manner as to defy detection by anybody but an expert.

One way is to moisten the finger and draw it across the back of a card. In this way a mark will remain even if the cards are used continuously for days. The mark is almost imperceptible, particularly after the cards have been handled once or twice, except to the practised eye. Sometimes the cards are marked straight down, sometimes straight across, and sometimes from corner to corner. By a variation or combination of these markings every high card can be singled out. Another method is the use of cards bearing a very intricate pattern on their backs; these look all alike to the victim, but in reality there is a slight variation in them.

Another ingenious method of marking a card is to lay it on its back on a hard surface and prick it with a very fine needle. In this way a tiny lump is raised on the back of the card by the fine prick in front. The position of this little lump records by its distance across the card the suit, by its distance down the card the value. Therefore one tiny

STOP PRESS NEWS

£200,000 WINDFALL BECOMES THE PROPERTY OF A POOR IRISHMAN RESIDING IN LIMERICK

Property said to be worth £200,000 has just been awarded by the American Courts to John Dillon, who has proved his claim as next-of-kin. There were several claimants to the above fortune, one of these a French woman named Marie Duval who said that she had been living with deceased but failed to produce any documentary evidence.

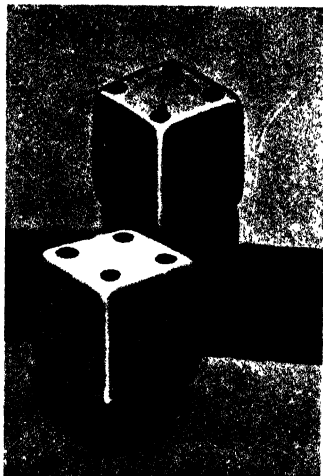
The Judge said the claim was a bare faced fabrication. The late Michael Dillon emigrated to America many years ago, finally settling down in Bradford, Pennsylvania, where he bought a farm. Later, during boring operations, Oil was struck, and being compelled to sell to the Oil Trust for £150,000, he went to Seattle, Washington State and bought property known as Dillon's Buildings.

The late Michael Dillon, on his death had confided to the priest that he had relations in Ireland, but had not written to them, since he had left that unhappy country.

The priest informed Father O'Brien, who found the heir in very poor circumstances.

There were two conditions attached to the will viz. That the heir was to give personally £10,000 to the Church of Rome, and £50,000 was to be distributed amongst the poor. The money for distribution must be given personally by the heir to persons to distribute irrespective of creed or nationality, who have means of their own, and live or work amongst the poor.

John Dillon, being the only living relative, he will consequently have the handling of the whole of the money.



A CROOKED DIE

Part of the stock-in-trade of a "Deep Sea Fisherman" or con-man who works the liners. The die only beats the high numbers.

spot, almost invisible to the naked eye and unnoticeable save to the most delicate touch, will tell the dealer where every card in the pack lies.

Sometimes the corners of the cards will be turned down, but this is a very clumsy method, which would only be adopted where real "mugs" were concerned.

During a case at the Old Bailey, where certain cardsharpers were being tried, a well-known barrister, now a leading K.C., suggested to a prisoner who was giving evidence that it was an easy thing for three men to cheat a fourth at the time-honoured game of "Banker" by marking the cards. As the witness disclaimed all knowledge of how this was done, Counsel proceeded to give a demonstration to an interested audience which included the Judge and several K.Cs. Picking up a pack of cards he selected four of them; after curving these by squeezing them, he shuffled them back into the pack and dealt. The curving of the cards rendered it easy for the cards to fall in the way the dealer wished. The prisoner protested rather artlessly that the trick was new to him!

Another gaming-house that I raided was actually situated right opposite Buckingham Palace. An Army captain and a lady well known in gambling circles were running this place. Play would often go on right through the night, quite a number of ladies, who smoked and drank throughout the proceedings, were among the clientèle.

"Deep-sea fishermen" (cardsharpers who ply their trade on Atlantic liners) are frequently in evidence, and I recall a dramatic incident which caused, on one of these ships, the break-up of a card party which included some of these gentlemen. An apparently innocent game of poker was in progress when the Captain suddenly appeared on the scene, and delivered the following short and pithy utterance:—

"Cardsharpers are among the players here, and, if they do not withdraw in a few minutes, I shall have them put in irons for the rest of the voyage and handed over to the police at Liverpool."

That little game broke up in short order, and some of the passengers who had been most assiduous in their attendance at cards were never seen to play again on *that* voyage.

The "deep-sea fishermen" form a class of their own, travelling the ocean the year round. After "trimming" their "mug" on board and obtaining his I.O.U., they would pass just a few days with him in London, Paris, or New York, in order to get the actual cash, and then they would hie them back to the "ferry" once more. But their numbers are diminishing rapidly, owing to strict surveillance, a dearth of "mugs", and general tightness of money.

Word came to me on one occasion that an exceptionally clever international cardsharp had come to London and was staying with two ladies, who were acting as decoys, at a West End Hotel. I eventually located him at the late lamented Cecil, where he was passing as a Baron, while the two ladies, one of whom was remarkably beautiful, were posing as a Princess and her companion. The "Baron" had given out that he was in London on important diplomatic business. I kept a sharp look-out and shadowed him carefully for a few days. Finally, he invited a guest to his room one evening for a game of cards.

In the middle of the game, the house detective, with whom I was in touch, knocked at the door and, making some excuse, entered the room. The "Baron" was exceedingly annoyed at the interruption. His guest, however, was invited to accompany the house detective downstairs, where he was given a gentle hint that it would be wiser not to play cards with the diplomatic French nobleman.

The management went further and presented the "Baron" with his bill next day; this he had not sufficient funds to meet, so his luggage was claimed. An examination of this confirmed our suspicions; it contained hardly any clothing, but it did contain several packs of new cards, some of which were undoubtedly marked.

It was unfortunate that the Princess and her companion were also unable to settle their bills at the time. In the end

the "Baron" managed to find, by some means or other which can be shrewdly guessed at, sufficient cash to release the trio's baggage, and he left in great haste for Paris. Nor has he returned, for his name has been added to the "gated" list.

In the East End and some other parts of London, ten to fifteen years ago, the more common type of "spieler" (gaming house) flourished, and in these faro was the favourite game. The clientèle in these places was usually mixed and, in many cases, distinctly cosmopolitan. Despite this fact, it was exceedingly difficult for a police officer, even in disguise, to become a member of one of these "spielers", so that it was a hard job to secure the evidence necessary to justify a raid.

I remember one of these clubs, at King's Cross, which a colleague and I were detailed to watch and try to enter.

In spite of many ruses, we were unsuccessful in our efforts. One evening, however, my colleague and I were reconnoitring the premises, when we noticed that a ledge ran from the next house right across that occupied by the club with, only a few feet below, the windows of the actual rooms where the gambling was in progress.

We therefore consulted the proprietor of the house next door and fortunately found that he was exceedingly hostile to gambling in all its forms. So he readily agreed to allow us access to this ledge through his premises.

For some nights the late Detective-Inspector Cunningham and I hung on literally by the skin of our teeth, watching through the parted blinds, and saw the faro schools in full progress. The room was packed with gamblers, who little thought that two detectives were watching their every movement, very uncomfortably ensconced on a window-ledge, where the slightest slip would have meant a drop of from fifteen to twenty feet onto the pavement.

The time came for the arrangements to be made for the raid, and our Superintendent said to Cunningham, "You and Leach had better take up your usual positions on the

Poor old Jim Cunningham. He was one of the greatest fellows I have ever known in the Service. Most capable and tactful, he was a man of lion courage. I remember an occasion when he saved me in a tight corner in the St. Luke's district, where we were raiding a receiver's den.

I was engaged with a prisoner in a back room when a notorious thief, a very powerful fellow, burst in. Jimmy happened to be watching outside and saw him come in. Just as I looked like having a rough time, Jim took matters in hand. The intruder struck at him, but was met by a right counter that Jimmy unleashed as quick as lightning and which sent the thief to the floor, where he lay prone.

Jimmy was a stickler for work, and never seemed to get tired. This reminds me of one of my first jobs as a young detective, on which I was engaged with him. We were trying to arrest a thief, and this necessitated our keeping a house in Clerkenwell under observation. It was a bitterly cold night, and for the last eight or nine hours we had hardly been able to move. About 2 a.m. Jimmy said, "Well, our man is evidently not returning, but we'll take a chance in the morning; go home and have a nap; meet me here again at six o'clock and we'll try then."

He was my senior, so I had to obey orders and go home. Anyway, on that occasion the early bird did catch the worm.

Jimmy Cunningham, after retiring from the Service, was for years house detective at the Hotel Cecil and, as such, was known all over the world by patrons of the great caravanseraï. During my time at the Yard, when I was dealing with confidence-tricksters and card-sharpers, I often received

ed nightly. On the night of the raid, Jimmy and I took up our places, ready to rush the place. The ground floor was carried on as a restaurant, in order to camouflage the gaming which was going on upstairs; in the restaurant was a bell by means of which the presence of any suspicious customers could be signalled to the gamblers above.

The signal for rushing the place was to be given by means of a handkerchief; whether Jimmy was over-anxious that night I do not know, but he certainly mistook the signal, for, shouting "Come on", he made a sudden rush for the door of the restaurant. I followed at once.

As we were dashing through the restaurant, four or five Germans attempted to stop us from reaching the entrance to the stairs; but Jimmy brushed them aside, and up we went.

However, the alarm signal had sounded and, as we reached the gambling room and Jimmy seized the faro cloth, someone smashed the lamp with a chair, and a concerted attack was made on us. We were hustled out on to the narrow landing, fighting desperately to stem the rush. Jimmy was making his presence felt while, reaching over the banisters, I aimed a blow with my truncheon at a big German who had pushed me on one side in his flight. It knocked him down the stairs.

We were, however, hard put to it to defend ourselves, when, in the nick of time, much-needed help arrived; our colleagues, who had only just realised what was happening, came to our help; they had not noticed at first that, owing to Jimmy mistaking the signal, we had made a premature raid.

In the general mêlée, the proprietor made his escape. With two colleagues, I kept an all-night watch in the house. The hours passed slowly; from time to time noises were heard

which might indicate the return of the missing proprietor, but they were false alarms.

About four a.m., one of my colleagues was suddenly taken very unwell; he lay back groaning and complaining about terrible pains in the stomach. "I've been poisoned," he said, "I just took a drink out of that bottle which I thought contained old wine." After a hastily-administered emetic he recovered somewhat, and we then discovered that the bottle contained nothing more poisonous than some very sour vinegar.

At length our vigil was rewarded; just as we were feeling thoroughly tired out and ready to go home to eggs and bacon, the missing proprietor arrived over a wall by the back entrance, thinking, no doubt, that the coast was clear at last.

CHAPTER IX

JEWEL THIEVES—FRAUDS.

I SUPPOSE that, even more marked than with other criminal classes, vanity stands out as an eternal "trait" with the jewel thief. It is a curious trait, and one which the detective may often put to good use.

The jewel thief is often superstitious; so are other crooks. He is generally a specialist; but so are many of his colleagues in other branches of crime.

But, generally speaking, his vanity marks him out. And yet, though it may seem strange, the "Raffles" type is practically unknown. Jewel thieves are drawn from a much lower stratum of society; they have graduated through petty robberies from small places. As a rule, they lack education and appearance, and they surely have little to be vain about, where their personal appearance is concerned.

But, as soon as they have brought off their first really big coup, they put on airs and graces which would make the veriest "born-in-a-night" film star blush with shame.

For, from being merely part of the rank-and-file of the underworld, they have passed, at one fell swoop, to the aristocracy, and they are not slow in letting their friends mark the change. It is this change in their personal demeanour which gives the wideawake detective the danger signal.

From then on it is only a question of time before the jewel thief goes to his more or less long home—prison.

Early on in my detective days five thousand pounds' worth of jewellery—a respectable sum in those days—was stolen from a shop in a provincial town. Entry was gained by "topping", that is, through an adjoining building, thence on to the roof and through a skylight.

As a rule, in this class of work, there are certain little touches which will put an experienced officer on the right track from the start; he will be able to recognise certain mannerisms which will narrow his search to one, two, or, at most, half a dozen possible perpetrators of the crime. In this case, however, such touches were of a nature which we could not recognise. The safe had been "broken" in a certain manner; a piece of candle, by the light of which the man or men had worked, had been left behind.

We were without any clue as to the culprits, but it seemed to be the work of men who had not previously pulled off a big job. I say "men" because, in the whole of my experience I have known but two instances of a man working single-handed in this branch of crime. For it is considered necessary to have at least one man "screwing" (on the look-out) while another man tackles the "peter" (safe).

We were rather in a quandary, for we knew that, in a few hours, the men would have disposed of their booty to a "fence" (receiver). Of course, we made the usual enquiries in the latter direction, but without much hope of success. For a detective cannot look for much useful information from a "fence".

It only remained for us to wait with what patience we might. "I bet they give themselves away within a month," said I to a fellow-officer, trusting that the usual vanity would give the thieves away. And it did, and in much less time than I had allowed, in a fortnight, to be exact.

One of the gang concerned in the burglary was an expert climber; he would shin up a pipe to the top of a house like a monkey, gaining a foothold where none was apparent in some cases; he must have had eyes that saw in the dark; in fact, he was one of the earliest cat-burglars known. On one occasion, when this man was undergoing a sentence of penal servitude, he escaped from prison and was captured some distance away, actually wearing the prison chaplain's clothes, which he had borrowed! Unfortunately for him,

his appearance was scarcely "reverend" enough to do justice to his borrowed plumes.

After this lapse of time a detective in the Soho district reported that a middle-aged man, who had usually been seen in the company of crooks, had suddenly blossomed forth in noticeable fashion. Going into the district in question, a little observation soon told me that I was on the right track.

The man in question was a small fellow, who had up till then always been shabbily dressed. Sporting an untidy little moustache, rather cross-eyed, and nervous and excitable in his manner, he had been something of a laughing-stock with his pals. But now, in the space of two weeks, he had put on a complete change of plumage. The old cap was replaced by a brand-new bowler, worn at a jaunty angle. A loud check suit had given him added confidence, and he had started to press his suit with a flashy, overdressed woman, the mistress of a well-known crook.

This case was one of my first jobs of shadowing, and I well remember locating our man in the old Metropolitan music-hall in the Edgware Road, where he was sitting in the stalls with a lady; both were extravagantly dressed and the lady was wearing certain articles of jewellery that we were looking for.

When they left the music-hall he called one of the old "growlers" and, as we could not secure another cab, we were obliged to cling on to the back of his vehicle and follow him home in this manner.

Later the gang foregathered at this place, and we were able to raid it and effect their arrest.

He had begun to throw his money about, and, adopting a superior attitude to his old pals, had begun to cultivate the acquaintance of what he presumed to be the top-notchers who frequented a well-known house of call in the City.

Before long he was observed in conversation with a man who was known to be the "go-between" of one of the biggest "fences" in the East End.

It was quite obvious that our little friend must have recently been concerned in a big job. Nor was it long before I was able to establish the fact that he had engineered the great jewel robbery at Westminster; though, as it subsequently transpired, he had only received some £200 for his share in the job. Still, he was happy, and was letting everyone know that he was. He would tell the tale to all and sundry.

I checked up his previous record. It consisted of but two previous convictions, and for trivial matters at that, but the circumstances of the second of these—a raid on a suburban pawnbroker—were illuminating. For he had broken in by a skylight, and he had used a piece of candle to give him light to work by! Of course this was not definite proof that he had done the Westminster job, but it gave me something to work on. And I was waiting for his next moves.

They were as I suspected. For a while he lived on the gains of this first incursion into the higher flights, and then followed some visits to the West End, where he studied the big jewellers' shops. He was being pushed by the jewel thief's vanity to join the men "higher up". He was treading in the path followed by all of his kidney. Every display of glittering jewels was becoming a direct challenge to him.

Some weeks had passed before there came news of yet another big jewel robbery, and again "topping" and the candle were present.

I made a prompt swoop on the haunts of the little man. He and his confederate were as surprised as men well might be. They had had no time to dispose of their loot, and were fairly caught. As I led them away, the little man asked, with a puzzled air, "'Ow did yer rumble me, guv'nor? that's wot I want ter know." "Your suit, George," succinctly remarked one of my colleagues, giving a glance at the loud checks.

Some time afterwards I met him on Waterloo Bridge; he cut a sorry figure; in the meantime he had served another

stiff sentence; still, he had retained his vanity, and my apparent failure to recognise him cut him to the quick! "Wot, forgotten *me*? Forgotten old George, wot brought off that Westminster job?" It was said more in sorrow than in anger. He was so hurt that he even forgot to "tap" me for the usual half-crown which crooks down on their luck seem to consider any "busy" who may have arrested them in palmier days good for!

An astounding example of the vanity of the jewel thief was afforded by the quick-witted criminal who stole the Duchess of Sutherland's jewels.

He was another case of the crook who draws attention to himself by his passion for aping the elect. He had grown so important, in his own estimation, that he began to seek the company of people in a station of life far removed from his own.

Deciding to pay attention to a lady of considerable means, he actually followed her to the Continent. He met with many rebuffs, and his vanity received several shocks. During a stormy scene in Paris the lady told him to stop pestering her.

Realising at last that he had better make himself scarce, he was rather disconsolately making his way to the railway station; on arriving there, he had the most colossal piece of of luck. He saw and recognised the Duchess of Sutherland and her maid entering the station, the latter carrying a jewel-box. This was placed in a compartment, but the Duchess and her maid remained for a time on the platform.

The thief had time to enter the compartment, snatch the case, conceal it under his coat, pass down the train and make his escape before the alarm was raised. But, instead of leaving at once for safer haunts, he acted with colossal stupidity—and vanity.

He actually repaired straight to the hotel of his would-be lady love. She had thrown doubts on his social standing and pretensions, had she? Well, he would show her.

Entering her room, he threw the jewels down before her.

The lady, who was no fool, pretended to be impressed, but made an excuse to leave the room for a moment, when she promptly communicated with the police.

The crook's suspicions had been aroused, however, and he managed to escape to London. But now the Yard were after him, and he was soon caught, with the jewels in his possession.

Let me give another instance of how a thief's mannerisms often lead to his downfall. Some very large jewel robberies had been committed, in the Hoxton district, by a gang under the leadership of a man called "Cocky". I had known for some time that he was the ringleader, but it was not until he allowed his own special form of heavy humour full rein that I was able to rope him in.

His speciality was cutting through the bolts on a jeweller's shop at night, filling up the cuts with sawdust and coloured sealing-wax, and returning the next night to carry out the robbery. A few hours before the actual robbery was to be effected, he would call at the shop and make some trifling purchase, to get the lie of the land.

Well, as I say, it was he himself who gave me the cue as to how to put a stop to his little activities in this direction. A jeweller, at whose shop a serious robbery had been committed, remembered that, just before closing-time on the night of the crime, a big man, answering to the description of "Cocky", had called and asked for an alarm-clock. He had added, facetiously, "One that goes orf abaht 2 a.m. That's when I gets busy." Now, it was at precisely 2 a.m. that the shop was broken into, but Cocky had a perfect alibi.

On his next "job", he also had some funny remarks to make, and, certain by now that this was a mannerism of his which would always make its appearance, I made a round of jewellers' shops in the neighbourhood, and asked them to let me know directly they should notice, among their customers, a big, hulking fellow with, to his thinking, a pretty turn of wit.

A month or so later, a pawnbroker called on me, saying that a customer answering to the description given had called

to buy a watchkey. The pawnbroker has asked for the watch so that a fit might be guaranteed. The customer had no watch. "What do you want it for, then?" asked the pawnbroker. "To pick my ears with, yer . . . fool" was the uncompromising retort. That night I found that the bolts of the pawnbroker's shop were cut and filed. We laid the trap, and "Cocky" and his gang fell into it. His insatiable sense of humour had betrayed him. He used to go about ever after that threatening what he would do to the "man who had given him away". If he had only known, it was on his own perverted wit that he should have committed mayhem!

Another gang with whom I had to deal used to employ a "sheik" to help them in their hotel work. This gentleman would pay court to chambermaids and, under promise of marriage and a life of luxury, persuade them to entrust him, on some pretext or other, with the keys of the bedroom doors. The thefts would soon follow.

I quickly got wind of this little manœuvre and, ascertaining who his next proposed fiancée was and where she worked I turned up in time to stop the wedding and other things.

The arrest of a man and his wife for stealing a dressing-case containing valuables from an hotel in Streatham which I effected some years ago brought to light an ingenious system adopted by a gang in carrying out thefts of jewels. The gang would forge references, on paper with impressive headings, in favour of the woman I arrested; armed with these, she would apply for and obtain situations as chambermaid in hotels or in some capacity in private houses.

Once installed, she made the best use of her time in ascertaining the place where the valuables were kept and the habits of the family or hotel guest in question; this knowledge was passed on to the gang, who had little difficulty in bringing off the robbery. Often, in the case of hotels, a couple of the gang would take a room for the night, in order to carry out their job more easily.

This was, in fact, the method adopted at the Streatham

hotel, where the woman had obtained a situation in an assumed name and with forged references. After she had been there about a week, two men booked a room by telephone. They arrived the same day but, at 7.30 that night, both they and the servant had disappeared, with the suitcase.

Sometimes the woman would carry out the robbery single-handed as on one occasion at Golders Green, when, after having been only two days in her new position, she took the opportunity, when her mistress was out shopping, to collect all the jewellery she could find; then she left the house and handed her haul over to the gang.

Among the property seized on the arrest of this gang were several suitcases and jewel cases, jewellery, many keys, a jemmy and a torch, an automatic Browning pistol, and several cartridges.

The woman's husband handed over a pawn-ticket to the officer who arrested him and, while the premises were being searched, he got a screwdriver and, unscrewing the top from a crystal receiving set, took out six more pawn-tickets which he handed to the officer.

This woman was eventually sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, whilst other members of the gang received more severe sentences.

How two criminals actually missed jewels worth some £40,000 is a story which recalls to me the career of a man who, while he indulged in a little jewel-stealing from time to time, was quite catholic in his criminal tastes, as will be seen from his career. This man was arrested again only a few days before I wrote this chapter, and I shall refer to him as Bert.

Bert first came to the notice of the police in 1901, when he was sentenced to four months' hard labour for keeping an unlicensed dancing house—a club in the West End which was the forerunner of those which have so frequently been raided in late years. In 1916 he got a further eighteen months for forgery, in 1918 three months for being a suspected person, and, in 1923, eighteen months for stealing

a lady's suitcase. This brings me to the occasion on which he and a notorious Australian card-sharper and confidence-trickster, about whom I shall have something to say when dealing later on in this book with "con." men, were convicted for a big coup which, fortunately for the victim, did not quite pan out as the crooks had intended.

The story is an interesting one. The lady whom the crooks had been shadowing was rather more wide-awake than they gave her credit for being. It was known that she had jewels worth about £40,000, and Bert and his accomplice decided to make an attempt on these, choosing a time when the lady was travelling from London to Dover. They awaited her arrival at Dover station, believing that the jewels were in a suitcase which was accompanying her. On her arrival at Dover, a porter who was carrying the suitcase put it down on the platform for a moment, while his attention was otherwise engaged, and the two crooks promptly spirited it away.

What was their disappointment to find that its contents, instead of £40,000 worth of jewels, were a mere beggarly £250 in notes, some scent, cosmetics, and a couple of visiting-cards!

The jewels were in the lady's heavy luggage.

The two crooks drove with the suitcase to a local hotel where, after extracting the notes, they left the case and went away, only to be arrested some time later.

One of their associates, a gentleman with an interesting record, actually attended the trial in an endeavour to prove an alibi; but, unfortunately for him, I happened to be present in Court myself.

Another jewel thief, who was caught in the grounds of the West End residence of a well-known nobleman, and who was one of the original "cat-burglars", had had a chequered career.

"Pat" was the son of a prominent South African, who came to this country just before the War, with the intention of becoming a civil engineer. He joined the Army and,

early in 1918, was married to a young and attractive widow, who possessed a fortune of some £28,000, as well as two farms. Pat had represented himself as being a wealthy man, whose father owned gold mines in South Africa.

It was not long before he found country life too quiet—they were living in Lincolnshire—and, under pretext of business, made frequent trips to London, where he soon got rid of the major portion of his wife's money in bouts of dissipation. Then he persuaded her to sell the two farms, which brought in over £20,000. His wife had now become a nervous wreck, and he persuaded her to enter a nursing home and make over the remainder of her money to him.

Pat then blossomed out as a would-be M.F.H., announcing his intention of starting a new hunt. He did, in fact, purchase half a dozen hunters, for which he paid a stiff price. Trips to the Continent helped to get rid of the cash, and when his wife left the nursing home she found that all he had left was some fifteen hundred pounds. Giving her only twenty pounds of this, he sent her off to get a situation, telling her that he was going to London to make their fortunes.

Actually he went to an East Coast resort with her niece, where he bought a boarding-house; this proved a failure; but, one night, it was completely destroyed by fire, and Pat drew £400 insurance money.

Then he came back to London, and bought an electro-plate business; this also failed, and he was made bankrupt. Under an assumed name, he then proceeded to get rid of the remnants of his money by stopping at expensive hotels in the West End and mixing with a set which included many well-known crooks. The sequel was that, in 1923, he was arrested for cheque frauds and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

When he came out of prison, he found himself penniless and, faced with the necessity for earning something at once, entered on the profession of a "cat-burglar". In this capacity, his raids on Mayfair houses brought him in a good

harvest of jewels and other valuables, until his arrest at the nobleman's house brought him a term of three and a half years' penal servitude.

One of the most astounding prosecutions for jewel thefts was that in which a citizen of a South American Republic, said to be a Marquess, was concerned. I shall have to call this country Ruritania, in view of the fact that diplomatic intervention took place.

Defendant was charged with "being suspected of the commission of the crime of receiving property—a number of emeralds—knowing the same to have been stolen, or unlawfully obtained within the jurisdiction of the Ruritanian Government."

It was said by counsel for the Ruritanian Government that it was impossible at the time to estimate the value of the emeralds, and that proceedings had been taken against the prisoner in Ruritania.

This was confirmed by His Excellency the Ruritanian Minister, who produced a cablegram from his Government, saying that these proceedings had actually commenced. He was further authorised to apply for prisoner's extradition.

The prisoner, who gave his evidence through an interpreter, said that the emeralds had come into his possession ten years earlier, and that he wanted proof that he had stolen them.

The prisoner had been arrested on landing at Fishguard from an Atlantic liner, and a colleague and I were sent there to take charge of him. We explained to him at the time, in French, the offence he was charged with.

As my colleague was giving evidence to this effect, matters were complicated by the prisoner suddenly being seized by a fit; he had to be carried out of Court, groaning and screaming.

He appeared to be very ill indeed, and we procured some brandy for him to drink. To our amazement, instead of drinking it, he poured it over his head and rubbed it into his hair! It seemed to do him good, however, and, when he

had recovered and been brought back into Court, my colleague went on with his evidence regarding our arrest of the prisoner; it was explained that the latter had said, on hearing from us with what offence he was charged, that he had already been arrested in America, but had been discharged. The emeralds were his property, he alleged, and he had bought them in Ruritania ten years before, prior to the Government assuming control. The large strong box containing the stones which the Government said belonged to them was among his luggage.

In the prisoner's possession there had been found a diamond necklace, fifty-six uncut emeralds, of enormous value, and a quantity of other stones, set and unset. One diamond necklace was alone worth thousands. The jewellery which was set belonged, he said, to his wife and to friends.

While the emeralds were being counted in Court, the prisoner exclaimed:—

"These are the stones which the history is about. You may take them and throw them into the sea to avoid scandal. I bought these emeralds at the time of the yellow fever—I mean the green fever—when they were selling the stones there. I have no receipts, but there are witnesses who saw me buy them."

After we had conveyed him from Fishguard to London, he said, when charged at Bow Street, that he had bought the emeralds ten years before in Ruritania, when it was still permissible to deal in such things. "You can see," he added, "that they are of no great value compared with the jewellery I have bought."

The Marquess was an extremely fortunate man for, owing to the delay in the arrival of the extradition papers, the allotted time went by and he was discharged. He promptly made for the Continent, and we heard no more of him.

Some astonishing frauds have been perpetrated by criminals from time to time, but here is one which, I shall always think, is almost worthy to rank with the inventive genius of Koeppenick.

The hero was a humble milkman who, with the aid of a home-made uniform, actually posed with success, for a considerable time, as a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. The gallant officer who had been decorated with the D.S.O., so he claimed, and was attached to headquarters staff at the Admiralty, sported a uniform frockcoat, liberally decorated with gold braid and wore a sword—a little *faux pas* which, one would have thought, would at once have aroused his victims' suspicions, since officers attached to the Admiralty staff do not walk about with swords or, indeed, in uniform frock-coats.

The "Silent Prisoner" (for he did not utter a single word at his trial) was, however, able to make very considerable use of his home-made uniform and of his alleged position at the Admiralty.

On one occasion, he called at the office of a large dealer in typewriters and, representing that he was authorised to place the contract for the supply of typewriters for a well-known battleship then under construction, actually had a contract drawn up, which he "sealed" with the "Admiralty seal", thus obtaining a typewriter and other goods for his own use. The "scal" was, in reality, the impression of the buckle of his sword-belt!

His landlord noticed that he was paying considerable attentions to his daughter, and had occasion to ask him whether these were strictly honourable. "Oh, yes," replied the Lieutenant, "certainly they are; the young lady, however, has not a very good figure. Still, that can easily be remedied; leave it to me." The next day, the landlord was astounded to witness a procession of young assistants from a nearby store arrive at his house, bearing boxes and boxes of corsets!

This astonishing man would parade round Brixton, when his work as a milk-roundsman was done, dressed in his home-made uniform, accompanied by swarms of small boys, whom he used to regale with lurid tales of his martial experiences, illustrated by a liberal display of his sword and

revolver. His uniform frock-coat had actually been manufactured by himself out of an old frock-coat which he had obtained from his landlord on promise of a future payment of three pounds!

Eventually, he incurred a liability of over £60 to his landlady and further obtained a watch from his landlord by false pretences, little matters which, with others, led to his arrest.

When we went to arrest him, we saw, on entering his room, that electric wires were running in all directions along the floor, connected up to various lamps. "Stand back," he shouted, "unless you want to be blown to eternity."

Risking eternity, we took him into custody. On drawing tables lay plans and drawings of battleships. These, he informed us, related to vessels of a foreign Power, and were highly confidential. On the mantelpiece was a glass case containing a medal which, he had told his landlord, he had won in the Boxer rising. Actually, it was a medal won for good attendance at school in his distant past!

His appearance in the dock was, to say the least of it, unimpressive; it was hard to believe that the pale, silent, unimpressive little man, attired in a worn and ill-fitting frock-coat, could actually have carried through, with success, the pose of a smart naval officer, specially attached to headquarters staff at the Admiralty.

A glaring example, indeed, of how fatally easy it is to dupe the man in the street. Twenty-one months' hard labour was the Silent Prisoner's sentence.

Mr. Frederick was a gentleman who specialised in motor-car frauds. When he was eventually sentenced to three years' penal servitude at the Old Bailey for the fraudulent conversion of four cars and obtaining £1,450 by false pretences, a curious story was elicited. It was revealed that Frederick had, in quite a short space of time, obtained about £10,000 by fraud, most of which had been spent in riotous living.

Though he himself was married, with two children, he actually became engaged to several quite respectable girls, whom, under various pretexts, he induced to give him documents which helped him to carry out his frauds.

One of these girls who became his innocent tool, made his acquaintance in rather a brusque manner, being accidentally knocked down one evening by his car. She happened to be a typist in the employ of a prominent motor firm. Frederick was not slow to seize such a chance, and he eventually persuaded her to type, on the firm's notepaper, a false contract. Also, he got her to show him the signature of the secretary to the company.

This signature was forged by one of the cleverest of "pen-men", and the false document, when completed, was used with considerable success in defrauding garage proprietors and motor-car agents.

Frederick was now posing as a motor expert, and making journeys all over the country in a luxurious limousine, being generally accompanied by one of his lady friends. He was living in the utmost luxury, with a residence in Town and a house-boat on the river, while he had also acquired a high-speed motor-boat. A garage at Balham was another of his ventures.

On his return one day from the Isle of Wight, where he had been spending a little holiday with one of his female dupes, he found that the garage hands had been put off owing to lack of work. He was most annoyed and said that they must be brought back at once; even if they only made a pretence of working, the place must wear an air of prosperity. One day there started from this garage a most remarkable procession—a line of ten vehicles, tied together, four lorries, four chassis, and two complete cars. On its triumphal way across London, it held up the traffic everywhere. This represented part of Frederick's plunder.

The four cars which formed the subject of the Old Bailey charge had been obtained by fraud from a retired school-master, to whom Frederick had represented that he had

made large sums in buying, selling and repairing cars, but had lost it all in a sensational bank failure which took place at the time I am speaking of. An arrangement was entered into between the schoolmaster and Frederick, by which the former was to provide the capital, and the latter was to buy and sell cars, the profits being divided.

Frederick bought four cars on the schoolmaster's account, subsequently representing that he had sold them for £4,400. To account for his not paying the money into the business, he concocted a story that the purchaser was ill and had had to go to Switzerland, while his wife had had a motoring accident.

What had actually happened to the money was that Frederick had become "engaged" to another typist, who was actually employed by the alleged purchaser, and was spending money on her with the utmost prodigality.

From her he obtained an offer for the cars in question, written on the firm's notepaper, telling her that he wanted it merely to show to another prospective purchaser, so as to get him to put up a bigger price. He sold the cars at prices well under the cost and pocketed the proceeds.

He also obtained a substantial advance from the proprietors of some motor-car works by alleging that he had had orders for twenty or thirty cars to be shipped to India, among them one for a well-known Admiral of the Fleet.

His frauds actually dated back to some twenty-five years before, it was revealed in Court, when he had made his first essay in crime by the theft of some pigeons. After a little digression into milk-stealing, he came to the conclusion that it was more profitable to pluck "pigeons" than to steal them, and turned his attention to the extensive series of motor-car frauds which eventually landed him at the Old Bailey.

CHAPTER X

CROOKS' "ARGOT"—"SNOUTS"—ON THE TRAIL—A NOVEL "FLYING SQUAD".

"GUV'NOR, the 'diddikayes' are 'ramping' a 'tit' in the 'spruce' there; they're 'three-handed'; a 'nose' told me in the 'boozer'; there's nobody 'screwing,' as they don't think the 'busies' are 'wise'; come along quick with the 'mittens.'"

Thus spake an ex-convict to me one evening at Barnet Fair, where I happened to be on duty at the time, and perhaps his words do not appear to convey much meaning. They told me, however, that some gypsies had stolen a horse and had taken it into a field, where they were proceeding to change the colour of its coat; that they were three in number; that my friend had obtained these details from an informer in a public-house; that the miscreants had no one on the look-out, as they did not think the detectives knew what they were up to; and that I should make an immediate move for the scene of action, taking handcuffs with me.

Which information I acted on at once with, for me, very satisfactory results.

Here follows a glossary containing but a fraction of the better-known locutions from that unexpectedly rich vocabulary of argot, with which every crook is familiar, and every detective has to familiarise himself, if he is to do good "business."

GLOSSARY OF CROOKS' "ARGOT".

<i>Black, at the</i>	.	.	Blackmailing.
<i>Blag</i>	.	.	Snatch a watch chain right off.
<i>Blower</i>	.	.	Telephone.

<i>Bradbury</i>	. . .	£1 note.
<i>Brass, at the</i>	. . .	Confidence trick betting system.
<i>Breezy</i>	. . .	Afraid.
<i>Broads</i>	. . .	Cards.
<i>Broadsman</i>	. . .	Three-card trickster.
<i>Busy</i>	. . .	Detective.
<i>Buyer</i>	. . .	Receiver.
<i>Cane</i>	. . .	Jemmy.
<i>Canned</i>	. . .	Drunk.
<i>Carpet</i>	. . .	Three months' imprisonment.
<i>Carve up</i>	. . .	Swindle accomplice out of share.
<i>Chivving</i>	. . .	Smashing a glass in one's face.
<i>Clouting</i>	. . .	A woman shop thief carrying rolls of cloth or silk between her legs.
<i>Cock and Hen</i>	. . .	£10 note.
<i>Cons</i>	. . .	Previous convictions.
<i>Copper, coming</i>	. . .	Informing the police.
<i>Cover, at the</i>	. . .	Pickpocket cloaking movements of actual thief.
<i>Creep, at the</i>	. . .	Robbing place while people are in.
<i>Dancing the Stairs</i>	. . .	Office or flat-breaking; doing a quick job.
<i>Deaf 'un, turning a</i>	. . .	Not listening to.
<i>Deep Sea Fishermen</i>	. . .	Cardsharps on liners.
<i>Doing a Bust</i>	. . .	Breaking into a place.
<i>D'racs</i>	. . .	Cards.
<i>Drag</i>	. . .	Three months' hard labour.
<i>Drag</i>	. . .	A van.
<i>Drum</i>	. . .	Lodging or residence.
<i>Drumming a Place</i>	. . .	Ringling or knocking to see if occupants are at home.
<i>Dummy</i>	. . .	Wallet.
<i>Fanning</i>	. . .	Searching (for watch or wallet).
<i>Fence</i>	. . .	Receiver.
<i>Finnio</i>	. . .	£5 note.
<i>Fisher</i>	. . .	£1 note.
<i>Flashing (a "kite" or "kettle")</i>	. . .	Showing a stolen (cheque) or (watch).
<i>Flatty</i>	. . .	Uniformed policeman.
<i>Flim</i>	. . .	£5 note.
<i>Flit, doing a</i>	. . .	Running away with another's share.

<i>Floor, on the</i>	. . .	Penniless.
<i>Flypaper Act</i>	. . .	Prevention of Crimes Act.
<i>Fronting</i>	. . .	Breaking in by front door.
<i>Fullied</i>	. . .	Committed for trial.
<i>Gee, getting at the</i>	. . .	Spoofing.
<i>Glimmer</i>	. . .	Beggar.
<i>Got his hops in</i>	. . .	Drunk.
<i>Grass, a</i>	. . .	An informer.
<i>Groin</i>	. . .	Ring.
<i>Halfinching</i>	. . .	Stealing.
<i>Hoister</i>	. . .	Shop-lifter.
<i>Jacob</i>	. . .	Ladder.
<i>Jargoons</i>	. . .	White Australian stones, not unlike diamonds.
<i>Journey</i>	. . .	Penal servitude.
<i>Jug</i>	. . .	Bank.
<i>Kettle</i>	. . .	A watch.
<i>Kick</i>	. . .	A person's pocket.
<i>Kip</i>	. . .	Lodging.
<i>Kirking</i>	. . .	Breaking into a house while occupants are at church.
<i>Kite</i>	. . .	Cheque.
<i>Knocked off</i>	. . .	Arrested.
<i>Kosh</i>	. . .	Weapon.
<i>Lagging</i>	. . .	Penal servitude.
<i>Lollied</i>	. . .	See "shopping".
<i>Lot, red</i>	. . .	Gold watch.
<i>Lot, white</i>	. . .	Silver watch.
<i>Lumberer</i>	. . .	Con. man or cardsharp.
<i>Mittens</i>	. . .	Handcuffs.
<i>Monkey</i>	. . .	Padlock.
<i>Moon</i>	. . .	1 month.
<i>Moor, the</i>	. . .	Dartmoor.
<i>Mosking</i>	. . .	Pawning.
<i>Mounting</i>	. . .	Reading record of previous convictions.
<i>Mounting</i>	. . .	Climbing.
<i>Mouthpiece</i>	. . .	Solicitor.
<i>Mush</i>	. . .	Umbrella.
<i>Mushed-up</i>	. . .	Well-dressed.
<i>Nark</i>	. . .	See "Nose".
<i>Nick, the</i>	. . .	Police station.
<i>Nose</i>	. . .	Informer.
<i>Oncer</i>	. . .	£1 note.
<i>Once over</i>	. . .	Recognition.

<i>On the tap</i>	.	.	Begging, asking for a loan.
<i>Pavement Artist</i>	.	.	Dealer in precious stones who stands about in Hatton Garden.
<i>Peter</i>	.	.	A safe.
<i>Pinched</i>	.	.	Arrested.
<i>Poke</i>	.	.	Purse.
<i>Prop</i>	.	.	Tie-pin.
<i>Pushing the brush out</i>	.	.	Convict calling attention of a warder.
<i>Push-up, at the</i>	.	.	One who works with a gang of pick-pockets.
<i>Pussies</i>	.	.	Furs.
<i>Putter-down</i>	.	.	Man presenting forged cheque or counterfeit coin.
<i>Putting the block</i>	.	.	Masking a thief at work.
<i>Raking</i>	.	.	Term used by letter-box thieves.
<i>Rattler</i>	.	.	A train.
<i>Screw</i>	.	.	A warder.
<i>Screwing</i>	.	.	Breaking into a place. Also keeping a look-out.
<i>Shootfly</i>	.	.	Snatching watches.
<i>Shopping</i>	.	.	Giving a fellow crook away to the police.
<i>Showing up</i>	.	.	Convict making monthly report to the police.
<i>Shysters</i>	.	.	Sharpers.
<i>Skivvy</i>	.	.	A female servant.
<i>Sky</i>	.	.	A person's pocket.
<i>Slang</i>	.	.	Watch chain.
<i>Slashing</i>	.	.	Cutting across the face with a razor.
<i>Sloop</i>	.	.	Neckerchief.
<i>Smasher</i>	.	.	Receiver.
<i>Smashing a load</i>	.	.	Getting rid of twenty counterfeit coins.
<i>Smother</i>	.	.	Place where stolen property is hidden; or an overcoat folded on a pick-pocket's arm to mask his movements.
<i>Snide</i>	.	.	False money.
<i>Snout</i>	.	.	Tobacco.
<i>Snout</i>	.	.	Informer.
<i>Sounding</i>	.	.	See "drumming".
<i>Sparks</i>	.	.	Diamonds or other gems.
<i>Spieler</i>	.	.	A gaming club.
<i>Split</i>	.	.	Detective.
<i>Spotting</i>	.	.	Looking out for a place to break into.
<i>Spouting</i>	.	.	Talking.

<i>Spruce</i>	.	.	.	Field.
<i>Squeeze</i>	.	.	.	Silk.
<i>Star man</i>	.	.	.	Prisoner on first conviction.
<i>Steps, up the</i>	.	.	.	Committed for trial.
<i>Stick</i>	.	.	.	Jemmy.
<i>Stiff</i>	.	.	.	A letter.
<i>Stir</i>	.	.	.	Prison.
<i>Straightening</i>	.	.	.	Trying to bribe.
<i>Stretch</i>	.	.	.	One year's imprisonment.
<i>Sucker</i>	.	.	.	An intended victim.
<i>Tach</i>	.	.	.	Hat.
<i>Tackle</i>	.	.	.	Watch chain.
<i>Tailing</i>	.	.	.	Following, "shadowing".
<i>Taking the stripes out</i>	.	.	.	Removing the crossing by acid from a stolen cheque.
<i>Ticket, he got his</i>	.	.	.	Convict released on licence.
<i>Tit</i>	.	.	.	Horse.
<i>Topping</i>	.	.	.	Breaking in through skylight or roof.
<i>Touch</i>	.	.	.	Make a haul or bring off a coup.
<i>Tub</i>	.	.	.	Omnibus.
<i>Twist, at the</i>	.	.	.	Double-crossing.
<i>Two or three-letter man</i>	.	.	.	One who has been to penal servitude two or three times. Each year a letter is given by prison authorities to indicate year of sentence.
<i>Van dragging</i>	.	.	.	Stealing from vans.
<i>Wad</i>	.	.	.	Bundle of bank-notes.
<i>Wise, putting him</i>	.	.	.	Telling him all about it.

Just as the detective finds it very necessary, in the nature of his profession, to have more than a nodding acquaintance with this "argot" of the criminal classes, so is he often glad to avail himself of information conveyed to him by a "snout" "nose" or "nark".

These informers are often of considerable assistance to the police, and, while it not infrequently happens that their statements send a detective off on a wild-goose chase, it is never wise to reject their proffered information without at least sifting it with a view to use.

The profession of the informer is not a nice one; he is blatantly violating the old maxim of "honour among thieves"; nor is it unattended with risk; for your crook

is obviously going to make it hot for the man who has "shopped" him, directly he gets the opportunity, and I have known informers "tumbled" and severely man-handled by the crooks. Sometimes a "snout" informs out of revenge; at other times it is merely for sordid gain; on occasions it is to pay back some good turn done him.

Still, as I say, it has its uses for the police; and there are, of course, instances, such as the one I shall now relate, of a crook making good, and subsequently turning "nose", in a genuine endeavour to redeem his past and aid the authorities in the repression of crime.

This is the true story of the "Strange Nurse", one of the few "old lags" who really made good.

Of medium height and stockily built, with lined face and deep-set grey eyes that darted everywhere, under heavy eyebrows that hung in two bushy tufts from his brow. His silver hair, hardly sparse as yet, gave him almost a venerable look. Such was "Stiff" when I first met him. His profession; well he was a burglar, and the result of his taking to crime was the old tale of misspent youth. Bad companions and the usual wine and women caused him to drift in criminal circles and he became a burglar.

In this business he displayed unusual skill for a time, until the inevitable happened and he was caught and sent to prison for a short sentence. After his release he again reverted to crime and was captured and sent to penal servitude, which was common in the old days; such was his lot.

So he went in and out of prison, and when I first met him he had served several sentences of penal servitude. The long spells in prison had left their mark on him.

Each time he was released a loving relative, a sister, had given him a temporary sanctuary at her house and endeavoured to try and persuade him to seek the right path. Her efforts were successful in the end; the old man determined to try and reform, for her sake, and he raised

sufficient money to start a small greengrocer's round, and so eke out a livelihood.

I became a regular customer of the "old man" and helped him all in my power to work up his business because of the fight he was putting up.

"Stiff" could not help meeting many of his old "colleagues in crime", "knights of the stick" (jemmy), and many were the temptations put in his path, but he steadfastly refused to listen to them.

One day the old man told me he wished to have a confidential chat, and I invited him to my house. There he unburdened himself and told me the story of a big theft he had once committed at a country mansion.

It seems "Stiff" and his pals were working a well known residential district in North London, "kirking" it was called because it was between the hours of 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. when people were at church.

The haul was a considerable one. There was a "tumble in getting away", i.e., they were seen by someone and "Stiff" was caught; his companions however, made their escape with the booty. When "Stiff" was released from his sentence he looked his old pals up to get his share of the swag, but they just laughed at him and told him they had "done it in" long ago.

"Stiff" took it lying down, but in his heart he determined one day to have his revenge. It so happened that a few days before he came to my house, he had met the two men who had "slashed" him (deprived him of his share) as he put it, who evidently thought the old man had forgotten the past, and knowing his skill in certain directions, had "put up" a "screwing" (housebreaking) job to him. "Stiff" pretended to fall in with their plans, realising that his great opportunity had come at last. So he told me of their plans, and on the night the "job" was to come off "Stiff" was ill in bed, or told them he was. Armed with the information, I was on their track and all day we followed them until dusk came on and the two

burglars made for their objective, a large semi-detached house.

The burglars had watched the house for some weeks and learned that on a certain night in the week the owner and his wife went to the theatre, leaving only a maid behind in charge of a young child.

With my colleagues I was secreted in the bushes in the garden and when the burglars entered they made straight for a side door trying to force it with a jemmy. We pounced on them, there was a desperate struggle but we landed our birds. When "Stiff" heard they were caught he gave a grim smile and said "They should have known better than to double-cross me".

The old man was very handy in the house. He did many an odd job for me. We trusted him and often gave him a square meal when times were bad. My eldest boy was only a few years old then and it was difficult to leave him in the house alone. Evenings out were rare in my profession those days, and this was an additional handicap. My boy was a great favourite with the old man, who would make toys out of wood and play with him.

One day "Stiff" had called at my house to do some odd job, when he suddenly said to me "Guv'nor, if you and the missus ever want to go out in the evening, I'll stop behind and look after the kid. You can trust me now."

And so "Stiff" was duly installed as nurse, and an excellent one he made. No one could be more trustworthy. He would play with the boy when we were gone and then, when he was tired, put him to bed and lull him to sleep with some wonderful stories and bedtime tunes.

Never did we have a moment's anxiety over the strange nurse, and at night, when we returned, there would be the old man sitting by the boy's bedside like some faithful watchdog.

Old "Stiff" has joined the vast majority years ago, but it is to his credit that he kept straight to the end, and so sweetened the declining years of the devoted old lady, his

sister, who had sought so hard to keep him in the straight path. The memory of the old man oftentimes comes back to me as I sit by my fireside and think of the battles of the past.

Years ago in Hoxton, then a hive of criminals, a man came to the City Road police station, where I then was, and complained of his child being robbed. I caught the thief who had been committing this mean type of theft for some time past.

About a month or so later, the man who, so far as I knew, could not tell a thief from a tinker, was waiting outside the station early one evening, just as I was leaving to go home, looking forward to having an early night off for a change, a very rare occurrence in those days. He was palpably nervous, and beckoned to me to follow him. When we had reached a quiet spot, he said "Guv'nor, there's something funny going on in my street. Two or three times a week sacks are being taken into a house there and, from the smell, I think it's rubber".

He went on to say that, at night time, the woman in the house would take out a perambulator, ostensibly used for the purpose of giving the baby a promenade, but actually containing, packed away in every conceivable part, the rubber, or rather gutta-percha, as it actually was.

I gave up all thought of my evening off and, returning to the station, found a colleague and went off to the house indicated by my informant. On the first floor I noticed a door heavily padlocked. An unmistakable smell of gutta-percha was in evidence. Though I asked all the people in the house, they could not or would not give me any information. Then a small boy came up the stairs. "Who lives here, sonny?" I asked. "The man downstairs; that man, sir," he replied, pointing to a man hurrying out of the door. I seized him, telling him to open the door or I would break it open.

Taking a key from his pocket, he quickly undid the padlocks, and threw the door open. On entering the room, we

found two or three sacks packed with gutta-percha. Where had it come from? I examined the lumps of gutta-percha with care and noticed that they bore the impressions of corduroy clothing and of buttons; this gave me the idea that the stuff must have been stolen while it was still warm.

Was there a factory near which used gutta-percha? It came to me in a flash that there was a big cable company in Wharf Road, hard by. Making a careful search with my colleague, I found on the floor, near the fireplace, a half of a business card, bearing a telephone number, but no exchange. Still, the name of the firm was nearly intact, and eventually I was able to turn it up in the telephone directory.

Taking my prisoner and the sacks of gutta-percha to the station, I made further enquiries, which resulted in my being able to trace the owner of the perambulator, and he was also arrested.

Next day I managed to get into touch with the firm. An examination of their books revealed an amazing state of affairs. During a period of two and a half years about eleven tons of gutta-percha had passed through their hands, and this, in turn, they had sold to another firm. That night I returned with a van loaded with two tons of gutta-percha which I had traced to the last-named firm.

Later I went to the firm and arrested several of their employees, whose clothes bore unmistakable traces of gutta-percha having been secreted in them. This was one of the largest systematic thefts from firms with which I ever had to deal, and was eventually found to involve thousands of pounds.

Nor was this the only occasion on which I received valuable information from my friend the "snout"; but, in the end, certain thieves got wind of what he was doing and, one day, they laid in wait for the little fellow and gave him a terrible hiding. He came to see me with his head swathed in bandages. I am glad to say, however, that the manhandling he had received did not break his spirit. For he tackled the ringleader single-handed one night, and gave him a sound

thrashing with a heavy stick. After that, they left him alone.

To be a successful detective one must develop one's powers of observation to their fullest extent. In fact, one should really possess a sixth sense.

The slightest clue is often of the utmost importance in leading you to your man or solving the crime you are investigating. "Never give up hope" is an axiom of the C.I.D. man.

Nothing is more annoying or disappointing than to be on a case for some two or three weeks and, after long hours of patient watching and following up of clues, to come to a fruitless end; but there is always that feeling back of it all that your criminal will go a bit too far one day and leave behind him some slender clue which will prove to be his undoing.

A remarkable instance of this was furnished by a case on which I was engaged, in which some person, obviously mentally unbalanced, had been sending a series of threatening and obscene letters to two or three young ladies who were employed in City offices.

The contents were printed in block letters, and the missives were posted from all parts of London. To make matters worse, the writer was clearly following one young lady about as, in his letters, he accurately described her comings to and goings from her office, the clothes she wore, and the places she visited after leaving the office. The writer would direct her to meet him at various places and, as a signal to him, she was to hold a handkerchief or some other article in her hand. He threatened her with injury and all sorts of horrible things should she fail to comply with his instructions.

Well, morning after morning and night after night we followed her but, of the hundreds of people we saw on the train and at the railway stations and other meeting places, we did not succeed in spotting a single one whose actions gave us the slightest clue. From time to time we did follow various people who looked suspicious but, as I say, to no purpose.

On one occasion the young lady was accompanied by her fiancé, and was just sitting down to dinner, when this wretch telephoned to her—for he had even obtained her home address—and made the most threatening and abusive remarks. She became thoroughly upset and unnerved until at last her employers sent for me and said "Mr. Leach, this must stop; she cannot put up with it any longer".

It looked like a blank wall; my colleagues and I were thoroughly dispirited and disgusted, particularly my "first lieutenant", Detective-Sergeant (now Detective-Inspector) Campion, an exceedingly alert and astute officer; the anonymous letter-writer had described Campion in one of his letters, hinting what he would do to him if he persisted in protecting the lady.

However, it so happened that, that very day, another letter had arrived, of a more than usually vile and threatening nature; the scoundrel actually swore to kill the young lady if she did not keep the rendezvous.

This letter I read carefully through; the appointment was for Charing Cross station at 6.30 p.m., and the writer went on to say "Be near the ladies' waiting-room; I shall be watching; carry a handkerchief in your hand".

I had a "hunch" that we were going to succeed in trapping the fellow that night, and was eventually able to persuade the lady to try just once more.

I shall never forget that night. I was over-anxious to succeed. My colleagues, too, were feeling the strain of the long days of watching.

The station was thronged with the homeward-bound crowds when I arrived; it seemed to be a 1,000 to 1 chance, like looking for a needle in a haystack. But, in spite of all this, I had the feeling that we were to succeed, and my hopes were soon to be justified.

Taking up my position near the bookstall, I placed my men where they could command the approaches to the ladies' waiting-room, at the same time being in sight of one

another and of me, so that close co-operation might be ensured.

The young lady was told to stand where indicated in the letter; she was naturally extremely nervous, but somewhat re-assured by the presence of a bodyguard of detectives around her.

Some minutes passed, during which period I had time to reflect, as people thronged by in all directions, how extremely slender our actual chance of success was.

My eyes were sweeping the crowds in all directions when my attention was suddenly attracted by a rather shabbily-dressed man, who had stopped and was casting a hasty glance in the direction of the ladies' waiting-room. After doing this he hurried into the booking-office, where he purchased a ticket for Penge. His movements were being closely followed, and I saw that he made no attempt to catch the train, but returned to the vicinity of the ladies' waiting-room, when he again looked in the direction of the young lady.

Two or three times he walked quickly and aimlessly backwards and forwards, and something told me that here was our man. So I gave hurried instructions to two of my men to follow him and, should his movements appear in any way suspicious, to take him to the Yard and communicate with me.

Soon after, he left the station, closely followed by the two detectives. Then I went up to the young lady, and she was distinctly relieved when I told her she could go home.

An hour or so later, I received a message to go to the Yard, and there saw the man whose actions had aroused my suspicions.

After leaving the station, he had gone to a post office, where he had written a telegram which he afterwards tore up; the pieces were retrieved by one of my men, who noticed that the message was written in block letters and that it was obviously a fake telegram.

The man's subsequent movements were so suspicious

that the detectives decided to take him to the Yard, in accordance with my instructions.

In answer to my questions, he said that he was an ex-soldier, unemployed and in search of work. He could give no reasonable excuse for his presence at Charing Cross station that evening. He hastened to produce his Army papers and turned out his pockets, but there was not the slightest evidence to connect him with the threatening and scurrilous letters. I was far from satisfied; still, there appeared to be no other course open than to let him go. My attention, however, was suddenly attracted by his bowler hat, lying on the table. I always made it a point to be thorough in conducting a search, and it was my custom to look in the linings of hats.

Picking up the bowler, I ran my finger round the inside, and was rewarded by feeling, inside the band, some pieces of folded paper, such as are used by people when a hat is rather too big for them.

Taking the pieces of paper out, I opened them. On them, printed in block letters, were the names and addresses, not only of the young lady who had been with us that evening, but of two others who had been recipients of similar letters from him!

Later on I went to his house and conducted a search there, which resulted in the discovery of more threatening letters, all ready to be posted to various young ladies; these were of an even more threatening nature than the former ones. In the grate were lying the scraps of other letters which had been torn up.

After all those strenuous weeks of disappointment after disappointment, we had got our man.

At Bow Street, he was first charged with threatening to murder; but the charge was reduced, and ultimately he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment—a very merciful sentence under the circumstances. The man was a real danger to society, having been previously convicted for an indecent assault of a most revolting nature.

It was a long, long trail, but it got us "home" in the end.

And now for the story of a novel "Flying Squad".

On one occasion there had been an epidemic of burglaries and housebreakings in the Purley District. Despite the fact that I flooded the district with men and tried every means which might lead to the capture of the thieves, we were unsuccessful for quite a time. We had received descriptions of some men who had been seen, in a fast car, on the scene of two or three of the burglaries; but no one ever saw the number of the car which, after all, would not have been of much use, as it afterwards turned out to be a stolen one, and the thieves had false number plates.

Now the Croydon Aerodrome was also in my district and, from time to time, our duties took us there, and I knew quite a number of the pilots. They all possessed powerful cars, and a suggestion was made to them that they should assist us by forming a flying squad to combat the burglars.

They jumped at the idea and, under my direction and assisted by Detective-Inspector Lynch and Detective-Sergeant Fish, two most fearless and able officers, we met each evening in a quiet little corner at Purley. I divided the district into sections; as they came off their 'planes, my novel flying squad forgathered and, each accompanied by a detective, set out on their patrol. At first it all seemed deadly dull to them, but it was not many nights before they were in action.

Detective-Inspector Lynch's keen eyes noticed a fast car hovering about near a house, and the subsequent suspicious movements of the occupants were enough to tell him that they were not residents or calling on friends.

It was not long before the driver of this car became aware of the fact that he was the object of unwelcome attentions; shrewdly suspecting the identity of the following cars he promptly worked up top speed, and then there ensued a thrilling chase out of Purley. The airmen chauffeurs did their work well. Reaching a speed of over sixty miles an

hour at times, turning sharply off into side-tracks, the motor-bandits did their utmost to shake off their determined pursuers, but all to no purpose. Through Wallington, Norbury, Streatham, on to Kennington the chase continued. After hairbreadth escapes from imminent collisions, the airmen eventually ran their quarry to earth at Kennington; drawing alongside the bandits' car, they jumped on the running-board and effected their arrest.

This was a splendid bit of work and put an end to the activities of the housebreakers in Purley and district for some time. A pleasant break from my point of view. There hangs to this day in the Croydon Aerodrome the letter of thanks from the Commissioner of Police on which my late "flying squad" look with pride.

CHAPTER XI

THE CONFIDENCE TRICKSTER, ARISTOCRAT OF THE CRIMINAL WORLD, AND HIS METHODS.

"*Messieurs les Chevaliers d'Industrie*," as the French elegantly term confidence-tricksters (more generally known in this country and hereinafter to be referred to as "con. men") are the very aristocrats of crime.

They are a corps with whom I happen to have been brought into especially close contact, since, for many years, I was detailed for the duty of ridding the West End of London of the numerous and successful gangs of "con. men" which infested it after the War.

These men and their methods form, then, a subject to which I propose to devote considerable space; their exploits would indeed merit a volume all to themselves; let us see what manner of men they are.

In the cultivation of his victim and the necessary gaining of his confidence, the successful con. man spares neither time nor expense. On many of his best coups, hundreds and even thousands of pounds must be spent before the return, gigantic as this may be when it does come, can be expected. Just as thieves are, to a lesser extent, often financed by receivers, so, on a more ambitious scale, a con. man of reputation, who has a promising pigeon to pluck, need never lack the sinews of war.

One of the most valuable items in the stock-in-trade of the international con. man is a passport, carefully kept up-to-date and visaed for every imaginable country; for he never knows whither he may have to follow the goose which will eventually lay the golden eggs. Curiously enough, these geese are only too often to be found among the ranks of the

so-called "hard-headed business men", which is another reason why the trickster must be prepared to hop off, at a moment's notice, from Sydney to Scotland, from Paris to Peking.

Strolling down the Unter den Linden in Berlin, sunning himself on the Pincio at Rome, toying with a cocktail on Shephard's terrace in Cairo, in the latest "speakeasy" in New York or Chicago, everywhere where real money circulates, last, but certainly not least, in little old London Town—there you may see, if you know the infallible signs, your international con. man, perfectly, but not too ostentatiously dressed, calm and assured of mien, with the easy manner and charming conversation which only an intimate knowledge of the wide world can give; in fine, a man to whom, though ostentation is obviously anathema, money is a matter of small concern, even where his own quite considerable needs are concerned.

Confidence tricksters are, and always will be with us, but they were in their heyday in the years just after the Armistice, when money was plentiful and there was a glut of pigeons. The year 1920 brought a great influx of Overseas visitors to London, and in their wake there followed a host of the most expert of the con. men.

Many of the richer of these visitors had, all unknown to themselves, been marked down for months past as likely prey by the con. men's unrivalled "secret service". The fun soon began to start and it was not long before I was summoned by my superiors and entrusted with the delicate and difficult task of checkmating the activities of these plausible gentlemen.

I was fortunate in being able to recruit a splendid "staff", my second-in-command being Detective-Inspector Percy Smith, a very able and astute officer. My squad also included Detectives Fish and McCrae and some of the fine young officers who, since that day, have gained well-deserved promotion and will, in due course, reach the higher ranks and ably carry on the traditions of what I may perhaps

be permitted to term the finest police force in the world.

I had for many years taken a rather more than academic interest in the ways of con. men and was consequently familiar with their methods and habits. It remained for me to familiarise myself with their names and faces, which I did by means of a visit to the Convict Record Office, where a large number of photographs were placed at my disposal. Armed with these, we sallied forth to give battle to the invading army.

For "army" it was; it really seemed as if every con. man of any note, the world over, had suddenly decided that London would be, for some time to come, the most profitable field of operations.

I have mentioned that the successful con. man must have travelled extensively. This is perhaps the reason why so very few Englishmen are to be found among their ranks. It is a fact, which I do not attempt to explain, that the majority of con. men are either Australians or Americans; there are but few Frenchmen, and a mere handful of Spaniards, still trying to work the hoary old "Spanish Prisoner" gag.

It is the habit of the con. man, if he has not already been successful in establishing touch with a prospective victim on board the liner, train or 'plane which is bringing him to London, to haunt such places as St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the British Museum, Bedford Row, the Strand (perhaps the con. man's Tom Tiddler's Ground *par excellence*), picture-galleries, and the lounges of famous hotels which they make their headquarters.

Their favourite poses include the wealthy stockbroker, the race-horse owner, the retired cattle-farmer or gold-miner, and the gentleman of leisure. Faultlessly turned out, they frequent the most exclusive hotels and restaurants, play over golf-courses the membership of which contains a generous sprinkling of wealthy men, and travel from place to place in a superb Rolls-Royce or other expensive make of car.

They must also obviously be born actors, capable of sustaining any rôle at a minute's notice, playing up to the particular weakness or vanity of the pigeon it is intended to pluck; they are, in fact, fellows of infinite resource.

The American saying has it that "a sucker is born every minute", and it is certain that some of the exploits of the con. men reveal a gullibility on the part of their victims which borders on the incredible. Sad to say, this gullibility is nowhere more marked than in the case of the reputedly hard-headed business man, who only too often falls a victim to the old, old tricks which are repeated, in a novel guise perhaps, year after year. The reason for this, however, lies probably in a more widespread human weakness than gullibility—greed, the desire to get "something for nothing".

Lest it be thought that I am being unduly hard on the leaders of commerce in the above remarks, I may mention that, a little later on, I shall recount to you how one of these merchant princes actually parted with a sum of over twenty-three thousand pounds to a gang of con. men as the "entrance-fee" to an "international sporting club" where, it was alleged, information "straight from the horse's mouth" was to be obtained! Indeed a case of "too true to be good"—for the victim.

I well remember the summer of 1920. One day, at a loose end for a job, I left the cool confines of the Yard to look for "clients". I wandered into a famous café, and there, sitting at various tables, I saw twenty or thirty of the cleverest international con. men who had ever visited this country.

All were well dressed, corks were popping, the scent of the finest Havanas hung in the air, and the drawl of the Australian mingled with the harsh nasal twang of the American. The world looked good to these gentry. Making a mental note of new faces—some were already known to me—I passed on to another well-known rendezvous of these gentlemen, not far from Jermyn Street, and there I took note of some more faces.

Wandering along Piccadilly, I ran into an acquaintance

and accompanied him to his club. As we stood talking on the steps of this exclusive establishment, two men entered quickly; one of them gave me a glance; recognition was mutual; he was one of the most astute and expert con. men that Australia has ever produced. Somewhat surprised to see him enter those portals, I asked my friend if he knew the two men. He replied that one of them had just been proposed for membership by quite a reputable person. Curious to see what would happen, I waited outside, and soon saw the two emerge, accompanied by another man, smartly attired and bearing the unmistakable stamp of the Army officer.

Following the trio, I succeeded in locating one of them. They were in the habit of frequenting a high-class flat in Knightsbridge, of which one of them was the tenant. Another of the trio was living in not quite such luxurious surroundings in Kensington, while the third had a charming house in Maida Vale.

Discreet enquiries revealed the identity of the ultra-smart individual. He proved to be an Army captain belonging to a very good family. It was obvious that he was either an intended victim or a decoy. Subsequent events proved that he was the latter; in fact, it afterwards came out that he had run through a fortune, robbed of it by a clever gang, and had then become one of them himself, for they quickly realised the valuable asset he would represent.

My observation on these three men soon bore fruit. Some days later, a complaint from Ramsgate arrived at Scotland Yard. Three men had defrauded an Army officer staying at an hotel there of £200 by a confidence trick, in this case, the infallible betting system, of which I shall have a good deal to say later on.

This officer was sitting in the hotel lounge one evening after dinner, when the "decoy captain" of the gang came up to him, remarking that the hotel was a dull spot. A game of billiards followed, and names were exchanged. The decoy captain suggested that the victim should dine at his table

the following evening, and, on that occasion, a seemingly artless conversation revealed the state of the intended victim's finances. The decoy said to a waiter, "If there is a gentleman outside, will you ask him to come in?" When the waiter left in search of the gentleman, the decoy remarked that the latter was an Australian millionaire.

The "millionaire" soon appeared—as a matter of fact, he was one of the two men I had seen entering the West End club a few days before. He opened the conversation by remarking that he was occupying a suite of rooms at a neighbouring hotel, that he had recently made £80,000 over a deal in wool, and that his people had a big business in Bombay, importing polo ponies from Australia.

The victim was now suitably impressed, and the party arranged a game of golf for the next day. Over this the acquaintanceship ripened so rapidly that our conspirators deemed that the time had come to spring the trap. So the decoy captain, taking the victim aside, opened the ball by saying, "What I am going to tell you is a business proposition"; he went on to describe how he liked to gamble and take a quick profit, that he represented a syndicate of wealthy business men, whose names were almost household words, and that his friend was a member of that syndicate.

"It's a matter of pure mathematics," he added. "Our syndicate is immensely wealthy; we control a stable of over 100 horses, and are in a position to know what is going on in other stables. For instance, we know what is happening in Blank's stables (referring to a well-known trainer). Now, if some considerable time before the race we know that a certain horse is likely to win, we can back that horse at a long price. The very fact of our putting a large sum on the animal causes the odds to shorten."

The two then adjourned for lunch, during which meal the decoy went on to say, "Later on, before the race is run, we give a Press dinner, and let the Pressmen know in confidence that we consider this horse is a good thing. Of course, they go out and hand it all round the country; and, as a con-

sequence, a large number of small people are induced to back the horse at a much smaller price”.

Other details about “hedging” bets followed, suggesting that, whether the horse backed by the syndicate won or not, a profit was bound to ensue. “Personally,” said the tempter, “I get about £6,000 a year out of my firm, and, over and above that, I have made between £25,000 and £30,000 through the syndicate. When I undertook to do business for this syndicate, I reserved the right to let my friends in privately for comparatively small amounts. I don’t want to induce you to do anything against your will, but, if you care to put any money in, I can promise you you will not lose it; in fact, you are bound to make money; I should suggest your putting in £200.”

“If it comes off,” he went on to say, “I shall be able to pay you about £2,500; if the horse does not win, £600 to £800. I should not think of telling this to a ‘wide’ man, by which I mean a man who is accustomed to racing and understands the business thoroughly.”

The victim, dazzled by such alluring prospects of wealth, handed to the representative of the syndicate his cheque for £200. “Leave it open,” said the decoy; “I am going up to London to-morrow on the syndicate’s business, and will pay it in with the rest of the money. I shall be coming back to-morrow night. At a later date you may expect to receive your profit from the investment.”

What happened to the £200? The cheque was cashed by the decoy captain, and divided *pro rata* among the trio of con. men.

The victim, however, who had been rather rushed off his feet, reflected on the scene, became suspicious of his new-found friends, and finally called on the Chief Constable of Ramsgate, Mr. Butler, a most astute and capable officer.

I was deputed to assist him, and we were not long in piecing together sufficient evidence to obtain a warrant for the arrest of the three tricksters for conspiring to defraud. They were identical with the men I had seen leaving the West End club and had fortunately been able to locate.

By the time the warrant was granted they had disappeared. Two of them had migrated to Brighton and were staying at one of the leading hotels there. They were obviously out for fresh prey. In a few days, one of them left and was shadowed by one of my men to his flat in Kensington. After his arrival there we kept him under close observation, and eventually followed him to a club in Piccadilly, where he was joined by the decoy captain. With the Chief Constable of Ramsgate I entered the club and found the two men quietly discussing their plans. They were greatly surprised at the object of our visit.

In their possession was found a book of blank vouchers, on each of which was printed an acknowledgment of a bet, but without the name or address of any commission agent. These forms are used by confidence tricksters to impress their victims when operating the infallible betting system, because they appear to relate to genuine wagers.

When we searched the well-appointed flat of the decoy captain we found more of the betting books, a number of packs of cards, a bundle of I.O.U.s. for large amounts, and other documents which clearly showed that the gang had been fleecing the innocents by means of a card-game known as "Double Ace", which I will explain later on. For this reason I also pass over here the exploits of the decoy captain and his gang at cards, merely mentioning that, when we effected his arrest and that of his accomplice, the third member of the gang, the "Australian millionaire", had gone to Brighton, and was arrested there, while he was actually propounding the racing syndicate's "system" to a dentist, who thought that an "extraction" from him was intended and communicated the good news to the Brighton police.

A famous K.C. was briefed for the defence; and, in the meantime, the warrant for conspiracy at Ramsgate had been issued and the "millionaire" joined his confederates in the dock on this charge; all three were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

As for the "decoy captain", it was a sad ending to the career of an ex-Army officer, who had served his country well and had been wounded on more than one occasion during the War. Possibly for this reason, he received only a short sentence.

Soon after his release from gaol, I ran across him in Piccadilly. He was sauntering along, faultlessly attired, sporting a carnation in his buttonhole, the *beau idéal* of the "man-about-town". He seemed to bear me no ill-will. When I last heard of him, he had gone abroad, and was making a determined endeavour to earn an honest living. I wished him luck before he left these shores, and he announced his firm decision to run straight in future, which, to the best of my knowledge, he is doing.

Thus ended my first important capture of a gang of con. men who had been battenning on the gullible, and leading, for years, a life of luxury in all parts of the world.

I am going to tell you something of a very favourite method with the con. men for separating their victims from their money—a little game known as "Double Ace", and also as "Kangaroo" or "Anzac Poker". These latter names indeed indicate the country of its origin. A simple little game, it is a rare money-maker in the hands of the expert con. man who is out to exploit the get-rich-quick brigade.

It is a game in which immense sums can be, and are lost; I have known an occasion when there was actually no less than £12,000 in the "kitty" when the con. men finally landed their fish. The method of its playing is as follows:

All the players put an agreed sum in the pool, and the dealer exposes a card; he then bets the whole or part of the pool that the next card turned up will be of a higher value than that already exposed. Should he win, he takes out of the pool the amount of his bet and passes the cards to the player on his left. Aces are low, so that a player is almost a certain winner if the first card he turns up is an ace. Only another ace can let him down.

Unknown to the victims, two packs are used. In the first pack two aces are placed so that they are faced separately when the con. men are playing, and they contribute their losses to the pool by means of I.O.U.s. Then, when the paper and cash in the pool amount to such a sum as they believe their victim will be able to pay, they wait until it is his turn to take the cards, distracting his attention while the packs, which are of identical pattern, are changed. The victim is then invited to deal.

He turns up an ace. The con. men applaud his good luck; they point out that, as three aces have already been exposed, it is long odds on his winning his bet, and encourage him to go for the whole pool. This he does and of course turns up the fourth ace, which has been "planted".

The pool is counted; the victim gives his cheque for the amount; no time is lost in cashing this the next day, and the proceeds are quickly shared out among the gang.

But—and this is where the high-class con. man differs from most of his criminal brethren—do not think that the perpetrators of the coup always disappear, once they have brought it off. Far from it; they stay and brazen it out, only too often lulling the partially-awakened suspicions of the victim by real *tours-de-force* of personality and tact. They will pluck a pigeon again and again, until not a feather is left.

Distance, indeed is no object to these gentlemen; they are prepared, as will be seen from the stories I am about to relate, to follow their victims, or even, on occasion, to lure them half across the world.

During the whole of the process of more or less "painless extraction", the victim is under the surveillance of one or more members of the gang. His every move is watched, from start to finish of the "operation", by "friends" who are sometimes well in evidence, at other times lurking in the background.

There are occasions, of course, when the projected coup does not come off exactly as planned; such an occasion was,

I remember, when a young and rising barrister was lured into one of these little games; it was, as a matter of fact, the identical game when there was £12,000 in the pool. The barrister, after dining with a member of the gang at a West End hotel, consented to accompany him to a luxurious flat in Knightsbridge, where he was introduced to other con. men. Drinks and cigars were promptly forthcoming, and an air of unostentatious wealth pervaded everything. After a while somebody suggested a quiet little "round game"; needless to say, this proved to be "Double Ace".

As the evening wore on and the drinks and cigars circulated more rapidly, so the pool began to assume unwieldy proportions, until it actually reached the figure of £6,000; of course, only a portion of this—mostly contributed by the barrister—was in actual cash, the bulk of it being in I.O.U.s. given by members of the gang.

An Australian con. man held the bank. Turning what he affected to regard as a master card, he bid for the whole pool, and lost. It was then the barrister's turn. Twelve thousand pounds in the pool! The excitement was intense, the stage was set for the final dénouement, with the con. men playing their part to perfection. They all told the barrister what a wonderful chance he had of going for such a huge pool. As a matter of fact, the supposed "mug" had already marked them down as cardsharpers, and was only waiting for an opportunity to get out of the flat without causing trouble.

So he decided to draw a card, and up came an ace. In spite of the protestations of the others and their strong recommendation to back his wonderful luck and go for the entire pool, the barrister contented himself with putting in his I.O.U. for a mere £100 or so, then turning another card. It was another ace! His suspicions were now confirmed.

It was now the turn of one of the con. men to take the bank; leisurely and without undue excitement, he bid for the entire pool of £12,000; then he turned the winning

card! Cheques then passed between the con. men in supposed settlement of their heavy losses, while the barrister, excusing himself for having left his cheque-book behind, promised to send on the amount next day.

"Next day", however, never came, and when one of the gang telephoned to him, asking for the cheque, the man of law turned a deaf ear, nor did he ever hear from them again.

Others did not get off so easily. One victim who lost a large sum handed over his motor-car in part settlement. Another, a dashing young cavalry officer, gave an I.O.U. for his losses and was on the point of sending a cheque in payment when, in consequence of a successful raid on the flat, we were able to inform him that this little "debt of honour" need not be paid. A well-known flying officer was practically ruined by this gang and forced to go abroad to retrieve his situation. An Indian merchant lost £2,000, half of which he paid on account; fortunately his bank, becoming suspicious, stopped payment of his cheque for the remainder.

A certain foreign potentate was lured to this flat on one occasion, after the gang had been after him for quite a while. He thoroughly enjoyed their hospitality, but his Eastern caution caused him to decline the little game of cards when, at the supposedly psychological moment, it was proposed.

So much for the "Double Ace" and its victims; now let me tell you something of the so-called "Infallible Betting System", another of the con. men's favourite weapons.

It so happened that, in 1920, I was combing the West End for a crook who was badly wanted by the American police. At last I was able to locate him living in a flat in Jermyn Street. Thither I proceeded and arrested him for a breach of the Aliens Act. While I was talking to him, there entered another gentleman, magnificently attired in a fur coat, and smoking an excellent Havana. "How long are you going to be, Franky?" he asked my man. Franky, with a wry smile on his face, indicated me. His friend was inclined to adopt a curt attitude, pointing out that he

and Franky were due at Kempton Park, and were already late. I pointed out as tactfully as possible that Franky would have to forego his racing engagement that day, as he was also due at Vine Street Police Station, and, after a little more bluster, the fur-coated one left. He was later on to figure as one of the principal actors in the notorious "Mr. A" drama.

While searching through Franky's papers, I came across the name of a major in the Army, with whom I made a point of getting into touch, eventually discovering that he had been fleeced by con. men to the tune of £2,300. It happened like this.

In the summer of 1920 he was staying at an hotel in Kensington, where he met a man who posed as a very wealthy African tobacco-planter, on holiday in London. This plutocrat was known in con. circles as "Little Ernie". This sobriquet is not peculiar to him, for there are several other con. men who go by it.

The major was subsequently introduced to other members of the gang, one of whom was known as "Rabbit". One of the party was said to be worth no less than £100,000. During the following days, the major was lavishly entertained at leading West End hotels and restaurants. Later on, still another member of the gang, posing as the proprietor of valuable estates in Australia, entertained the whole party at his exclusive hotel. The major was much impressed, for his host lived in style, with valet and butler, and a wardrobe worthy of a prince or a film star.

As the acquaintanceship ripened, the subject of horse-racing was gradually introduced, one of the gang mentioning that he and "Rabbit" owned horses and made large sums by betting on exclusive information which they alone were able to obtain.

At a dinner given a few days later at an hotel in Piccadilly, the conversation turned upon racing; one of the party made an excuse for leaving early, saying that he had to go to his club on business connected with the race for the Stewards'

Cup at Goodwood. As he was leaving "Little Ernie" asked him if he knew anything good; in a low, but audible tone he told Ernie that, in consideration of a good turn the latter had once done him in Africa, he would tell him how to invest his money in such a way that he simply could not lose.

Ernie then asked whether the major could participate, but his friend said that only a certain amount of money could be put on the horse; however, he would do his best. The major did not seem particularly interested, but Ernie reopened the conversation by explaining that, as he was ignorant of racing matters, he did not quite see how such large sums of money could be made; would his friend explain?

The con. man said that he and "Rabbit" were in a position, owing to their great wealth, to choose a horse and back it for thousands of pounds some time before the race was to be run. Owing to the large amount of money they had invested on the horse at long odds in this way, the odds would finally shorten, so that, before the race was run, the money which had been invested would be paid off at shorter odds; in this way the persons who had put money in the scheme would be assured of a profit of at least 100 per cent., which profit would be certain, before the race was run, it being immaterial whether the horse won or not.

This was the famous "Infallible Betting System".

Ernie, however, still professed not to understand the system, and artlessly asked the *major* to explain, which he did. Then he began to press the major to come in and have some money on. In spite of the major's refusal, he said, "It's quite safe; you can't lose", and, turning to the other con. man, added, "That's all right, put him in for the same amount as me; I'll stand good for him".

The "wealthy racehorse owner" then left to carry out the transaction, while the rest of the party, after an adjournment to a famous restaurant, where they had some champagne, went on to his flat, where they found him seated at his desk, writing. The flat was sumptuously furnished; the

articles on the dressing-table were gold-mounted and his very charming wife displayed some magnificent pieces of jewellery; everything indicated wealth.

The major eventually discovered that he was "in" on the deal to the extent of £9,000 and protested that this was totally against his wishes; in fact, he had not got £9,000. Lesser sums were then proposed, and finally he was induced to give his cheque for £2,000, while the two "heads" of the "syndicate" explained that they were in for £20,000 each.

A voucher from a betting book was given to the major; but this did not bear the name of any commission agent and was, of course, worthless; he was asked to sign the counterfoil. The animal which was supposed to be carrying their money rejoiced in the name of Ptah, and stood at 14 to 1 against.

The major wanted to know why the animal was backed to win only, and not also for a place, but the head of the syndicate replied, "It doesn't matter whether the horse wins or not; the profits are made before the race". It was urgently impressed upon the major that secrecy was essential; let the merest breath of their intention get abroad, and the market would be upset.

The scene is now shifted to "Glorious Goodwood". On the day of the race a magnificent car drove up to the major's hotel, with "Rabbit" and "Little Ernie". Arrived at the course, they met the head of the syndicate, who explained that he and "Rabbit" would be busy in Tattersall's ring. However, after the second race, he returned to the major and "Little Ernie" and said that he had put some money on a horse—no name was mentioned—and that they had won £500 each; he did not hand over any money; the major had, of course, not authorised the alleged bet.

Just before the Stewards' Cup was to be run, the major enquired the price of Ptah from a bookmaker and was told that it was 20 to 1. Thinking this strange, he asked the head of the syndicate what was the reason for it, and the latter promptly became very excited, saying that the market had

gone all wrong, that he could not lay the money off and that, if the horse did not win, they would lose all their stakes.

Ptah did not win, and it was a very crestfallen major to whom the gang expressed their sincere commiseration; they even told him that he would be helped out of the mess. It was in vain that he protested that it was understood that a profit was to be made, win or lose. As for "Little Ernie", his grief was simply terrible to see. When the major artlessly pointed out that a man of his wealth ought not to mind losing what, to him, must be a mere fleabite, he replied that it was not the loss of his money, but the fact of having been wrongly advised by his friends which upset him.

At this moment, up rushed the head of the syndicate, with the news that he had put them on a horse for £1,500 each. The major, though he was told that, having won £500 on the first race, he only owed £1,000 on the last bet, declined all responsibility for the bet in question. The major was in a deeply contemplative mood on the return journey. On arrival at the head's flat, one of the gang offered the major a loan of £250 any time he required it.

Two or three days later, when the major was in a flat belonging to another member of the syndicate, "Rabbit" arrived and told him he owed £500. On the major refusing to pay this, a visit to Paris was suggested. It was explained that there was a certain horse running there, whose victory was a foregone conclusion. Racing was not straight in France, and it had been "arranged" that this animal should win. It would be a pity to lose this golden chance. The syndicate felt that, in view of his losses at Goodwood, it was up to them to recoup the major in some way, and here was an opportunity. The tale was so well told that the major was finally induced to invest some more money.

Alas, on the Maisons Lafitte course a day or two later, the major's money again went "west", as did the head of the "syndicate", who took ship for New York, while the other members of the gang dispersed to different places on the Continent.

Now, the syndicate, immersed as they were in their travels abroad and various "business" ventures, had quite forgotten this little interlude; but the major, when I visited him, had not; on the contrary, his memory was excellent, so that a warrant was issued for the arrest of the head of the syndicate, "Rabbit" and "Little Ernie".

It came at an awkward moment for the head, who happened to be in London, preparing for a world-tour. He was a much-travelled man. In his flat we found seven of the betting voucher books, packs of playing cards, counters and poker dice. The three con. men were eventually all arrested, in different places as I shall show later on, the other two also being found in possession of betting books and cards.

To show that the head of the syndicate never lost an opportunity of doing business, I may say that, on one occasion, when he was accompanying his son back to college, he and his wife so ingratiated themselves with another "head"—the headmaster—that the latter was induced to try a little game known as "Slippery Sam", with the result that he was landed for no less than £500. Still, perhaps some of this went back in school fees!

"Old Mac," an Australian whom I finally had the satisfaction of arresting, had been responsible in his time for some of the biggest coups in the con. game. It is worth recording, at some length, how he eventually fell into my clutches.

I made a point of following up any addresses or other memoranda which I found among the possessions of the con. men I arrested, thinking that these would eventually prove useful. In this way I got the address of a gentleman at Eastbourne whom I interviewed. His was an amazing story; he had been fleeced of no less than £25,000, under the following circumstances.

This gentleman, a Scotsman, connected with a big firm of Colonial shipping agents, was returning, in 1919, from Australia. On board he made the acquaintance of a con. man known as "Old Mac". Looking a typical rancher, "Old Mac" described himself as a cattle buyer for the

Government of New Zealand, owning large ranches in that country, and generally giving the impression of being an extremely wealthy man. If the hard facts were revealed, he was actually returning to the Old Country after an enforced absence in Australia, where he had been residing for some time at Government expense, owing to a little con. exploit in that country.

In 1915 he had made rather a hurried departure from England at a time when I was seeking an interview with him, owing to his having been concerned, with "Rabbit" and another man, in obtaining nearly £3,000 by the con. game.

The Scotsman thoroughly enjoyed Mac's company on the trip home, and gladly accepted his invitation to stop with him in town for a few days. Mac had a charming flat in Savile Row, where the Scotsman was introduced to other members of the gang. In the end, the conversation drifted round to racing and, in much the same way as in the case of the major, the Scotsman, whom we will call East, was induced to have £1,000 on a horse. No horse was named, nor did East ask for the information, such confidence had he in his new-found friends.

Well, the horse lost and Mac was very upset. He explained that he had a friend who was second in command at one of the leading training establishments, and he simply could not understand how the information had gone wrong. There was nothing to do but to pay up, which East did, nor does he seem to have entertained any suspicions at the time.

Another member of the gang was introduced shortly afterwards; he was also a very wealthy man, who had large estates on the Ord River, in Western Australia; he was occupying a luxurious suite of rooms in Jermyn Street. He, Mac and East paid a visit to Windsor Races in a magnificent car. There they met still another gentleman, a Mr. Black, who was, it appeared, able to give really inside information. However, it was best not to be seen speaking to him, so it was arranged that he should go and place their commissions for

them. Though they were said to have won £700 each on the first race, at the end of the day they were £5,300 down each. East's friends did not seem to mind their heavy losses; and, at dinner that evening in Black's charming country seat, where he kept a string of racehorses in training, Mac went through the farce of making out a cheque for his supposed losses. It all seemed genuine enough and, the next day, East also gave Black a cheque for £5,300. Then he went to Scotland, but, on returning to London, stayed at an hotel in the West End, where Mac was not long in getting into touch with him.

A round of entertainment followed, culminating in a little game of "Anzac", during which East was mulcted of thousands of pounds. So much, in fact, that he told his friends that he could not meet the whole amount, and gave them a cheque for more than half, after which, slightly disillusioned, he made an almost immediate departure abroad, on business. Even there, the gang had not lost sight of him, and one day he received a letter to the effect that one of the gang had been good enough to settle the balance of his losses at the card game. This letter actually elicited a cheque for the amount from East!

The game was not yet played out. East eventually returned to London, where his arrival was hailed with glee by the gang. Fresh plans for relieving him of his superfluous cash were immediately put into operation. East was told that the head of the racing syndicate was then in France, busily engaged on working out an "infallible" system of betting.

It was the same old "hedging" story, but so cleverly told that the victim finally consented to part with £5,000, as a "loan", at first. Later, he was induced to accept, in return for his "loan", a betting voucher indicating that £5,000 had been invested on Spion Kop for the Derby, at 25 to 1.

"We can't lose," he was assured by the syndicate; visions of great wealth in the future, compensating for his heavy losses in the past, began to float before East's eyes.

All went well until the eve of the Derby, when suddenly something went adrift with the wonderful system. The head of the syndicate had not been able to "lay off" the bet; apart from East's £5,000, the syndicate were heavily involved and would have to stand by their commitments.

Spion Kop's Derby will be fresh in the memory of all; East was overjoyed; they had landed the great coup at last; a little matter of £125,000 for him would wipe out all memory of his previous misfortunes. Thinking of staging a wonderful banquet to celebrate their success, he eagerly awaited the arrival of the others. No one came!

Next day, the head arrived and coolly said, "On the eve of the race I was lucky enough to be able to cancel the bets on Spion Kop; here are your £5,000", and he gave East his personal cheque which, as he was an undischarged bankrupt at the time, was worth precisely the paper it was written on!

One would have thought that this would have been a little bit too much, even for the credulous business man; but no, East actually swallowed the very next bait the head offered him!

They were, he explained, to make a fortune by investing on Gilpin's selected horses for the Royal Hunt Cup at Ascot.

So well was the tale told that back went the head's cheque for £5,000, together with a good one from East for the same amount, all to go on Gilpin's selected, apart, of course, from the immense sum which the syndicate were to wager.

I do not want to tire my readers by monotonous repetition, so I will simply record the sad fact that this money also went west.

It was only then that East really awoke to what had been going on, and decided to sever all connection with the gang, who had already relieved him of about £25,000. Like many other victims of con. men, he was not anxious that the world at large, and his business associates in particular, should realise just what kind of a fool he had been, and, if it had not been for my stumbling across his address, the gang would have "got away" with this coup.

As it was, as I mentioned in connection with the despoiling of the major, we arrested the head and two of the gang. I remember the visit which Smith and I paid to the luxurious flat of the head of the syndicate. We were shown into the identical drawing-room where the famous game of "Anzac" had taken place; in such luxurious surroundings, one could almost imagine the victim being lulled into a sense of security. Even the articles on the dressing-table were gold-mounted.

We kept the door of the room open while the butler went to acquaint his master of our presence. There was some delay and, becoming anxious, we left the room to look for him; it was well for us that we did, for we were just in time to catch him as he was making for the door, bag in hand. A minute later, and he would have been away *en route* for the Continent, whither another member of the gang had already fled. This man, however, was cleverly arrested while boarding the boat at Dover by a member of the Special Branch, who recognised him from a photograph. He was loud in his protestations when caught, qualifying his arrest as an "outrage".

Nevertheless he was noticed to drop, thinking himself unobserved, a small notebook over the side of the ship; this lodged on a small projection and was recovered and found to contain some very useful names and addresses and general information about con. men.

For several weeks the case against these men dragged its weary length through the police-court, but eventually the gang were brought to trial at the Old Bailey, before the late Mr. Justice Shearman. The trial lasted for a week, and all five prisoners were found guilty, after which I was able to reveal to the Court the astounding fact that, during a period of barely three years, a sum of no less than a quarter of a million pounds had passed through their various banking accounts!

All five were sentenced to seven years' penal servitude, and so perhaps the cleverest gang that had ever operated the con.

game in this country passed to the cells below, quite dazed by the sentence they had received.

Just as I was about to leave the Court, the late Sir Herbert Austin, then Chief Clerk at the Old Bailey, called me over to his desk, just below the Judge's chair, and said, with an amused smile on his face, "Leach, his lordship has made a mistake; under the Statute the maximum penalty is five years' penal servitude."

So, a few minutes later, back the prisoners filed into the dock, heard their amended sentences, and departed again to the cells, before they had had time to express their thanks, if any, or to enquire what had softened the Judge's heart.

"Old Mac" died a few years ago, not a penny the better for his various frauds. His real name was Charles Scaton Mansfield, but he was always known in con. circles as Mac-Nally or "Old Mac". His favourite pose was that of a wealthy rancher. He had spent his life at the con. game, first coming into the hands of the police in 1901, when he was sentenced to six months at the Old Bailey, for defrauding the widow of an Australian. Returning to Australia, he was again arrested and sentenced to three years for another confidence trick, this sentence, however, being reduced by a year in consideration of his refunding all the money he had obtained from the victim. Then he came to England, meeting "Mr. East" on the steamer.

We have followed the remainder of his career; he received, however, a further sentence of twenty-two months for the "job" at Ramsgate, to which I have already referred. It was really through this case that I was able to connect him with the East affair, by tracing him through his banking account and other memoranda to which I have referred.

By this time the remaining members of the gang for whom I had warrants were far, far away, one in Japan actually again in touch with an intended victim, another occupying a luxurious suite of rooms at one of the leading hotels in New York, and planning yet another gigantic coup, the victim of which was already well in hand.

CHAPTER XII

THE STOCK EXCHANGE SWINDLE—THE "HOT SEAT"—THE "ROSARY"
—A LITTLE GAME OF GOLF.

As a result of my constant attacks on the strongholds of the con. men, and the consequent publicity given to the "Double Ace", "Infallible Betting System" (or "At the Brass", as this latter became known in professional circles), and similar methods for separating victims from their banking accounts, it became necessary for the "professors" to add to their *répertoire*.

So arose the "Stock Swindle", which met, at first, with a very large measure of success. The ground had, of course, to be prepared with the same care and lavish expenditure as in the case of the tricks I have dealt with. But one or two big coups had been brought off by this new method before I was able to get on the track of the gang operating this new swindle.

There arrived, one day, in London a prosperous business man from Australia, home for a holiday. Hardly had he arrived in London than a con. man scraped acquaintance with him by the time-honoured method of claiming mutual acquaintances in Australia; and, over a cup of tea, the twain had a pleasant chat about old times.

For another week the visitor was apparently left alone, but actually the gang were keeping him under careful observation. One day, in Ludgate Circus, he was accosted by a man who bore the stamp of a Colonial, who asked him whether he could tell him where Cook's offices were; on the business man replying that he was a stranger to London, the stranger said that he was in like plight, adding that he was a Tasmanian. When the business man remarked that he

came from Queensland, the other said, "That is strange; I am very glad to meet you".

Together they went in search of Cook's offices, and afterwards on a round of sight-seeing, parting in the evening, but not before an appointment had been made for the morrow. Next day the sight-seeing was resumed, and, in the course of conversation, the Tasmanian informed the other that he and his two brothers had recently sold property in Tasmania for £15,000. Having met with an accident, he himself had been recommended to go on a sea voyage, and had come to England. The hotel in which he was living was, it appeared, not too comfortable, so he asked the Queenslander to reserve him a room for the following week at his own hotel, where he felt he would be more comfortable and not so lonely.

More days of sight-seeing followed, and the acquaintanceship quickly ripened. One day, the Tasmanian insisted on taking a photograph of his friend in Rotten Row, after which it was discovered that the films were finished, so they repaired to the nearest photographer's to obtain a fresh supply. On the way there, they passed a man who was standing still, apparently engaged in the perusal of some documents.

"By Jove," said the con. man to the Queenslander, "do you see that chap? He's the man who has just cleaned up over £250,000 in one deal in cotton in Liverpool. He is a great friend of my godfather, Dr. Scott."

Upon this, the con. man went up and spoke to the other, saying "How are you. Mr. Johnson? How is Liverpool?" The other replied "I don't know you; I have never been in Liverpool". "But surely," insisted the con. man, "you remember Dr. Scott in Liverpool; he is my godfather; I remember seeing you there. As a matter of fact, he pointed you out to me as a good man to know, saying that you had just cleaned up a quarter of a million in a cotton deal." The stranger then replied, "So you are a friend of Dr. Scott. Well, just now I denied that I had ever been in Liverpool,

because I thought you were two reporters. I will show you why I am so nervous of the Press".

On his invitation, the trio adjourned for refreshment, when Johnson produced a wallet, saying, "My God, I *am* nervous; just read this letter I have received from my people". The letter stated that Johnson's principals, a big financial corporation in New York, were dissatisfied because he had allowed the newspapers to get hold of the fact that he had made such a large sum on the Liverpool Exchange, and they threatened to suspend him. This, he pointed out, would be a very serious matter for him, as the position he held was a highly remunerative one and, in addition, he was under a fidelity bond to the extent of 200,000 dollars; he also hinted that delicate market positions had been disclosed. His salary, he went on to say, was 25,000 dollars per annum. "Now you can see," he concluded, "why I was scared that you were newspaper men."

When they were in the street again, Johnson said to the con. man, "Have nothing to do with anything speculative on the Stock Exchange; gilt-edged securities are the best things to hold". "I do know some things," he went on to say, "and just to show you that I do, I could make you 50 per cent. on a pound in a very short time; but I won't accept more than a pound; if I went up to £5 the transaction would have to appear on the records of the Stock Exchange, and my name would therefore be divulged, which must be avoided at all costs."

He then suggested that the other two should each give him a pound, which they did. Telling them to await his arrival in a nearby café, he went off; half-an-hour later, he returned, and gave each of them thirty shillings, saying "These people I am with have me closely watched; if I receive any money, it has to be handed over to an auditor who accompanies me everywhere. My fidelity bond is such that I must not do any business myself. It is a pity, for I happen to know a very good thing, and I feel half disposed to go out for it".

The Queenslander's curiosity was now aroused, but he was not yet ripe for the plucking; a little more encouragement was needed, and this was soon forthcoming. Johnson went on to say "You two can come in with me on one condition; whatever money is required, I will find it, and no signature from you will be necessary". Thereupon the Tasmanian con. man said, "By heavens, I'll go in for it", but the "mug" did not bite.

Johnson had suggested that each of them might have 12 per cent. profit, and the victim said, "My friend can have the lot", but Johnson explained that he must have two names; the "mug" had everything to gain and nothing to lose. Finally convinced, the Queenslander agreed to participate.

Johnson then produced what appeared to be a roll of notes, saying "this is the equivalent of £3,000, in American dollar notes". Then, handing the roll to the Tasmanian, along with two credit slips, he added "At the door you will find a yellow taxicab waiting. Now, listen to me and do exactly what I tell you". Writing out something on some printed forms, he continued, "Hand these notes and these orders into the broking-house, to which the taxi driver will take you; just hand them in and say nothing; leave the rest to me. Come back as soon as you have done that".

Off went the Tasmanian and, when he had gone, Johnson remarked to the Queenslander that it was a stiff note that he had received from his employers. He had a wife and children in New York, and was building himself a big house there. He wanted some security in case anything went wrong, and that was why he was taking a chance on this deal. He added that he had made out the orders in the right surnames, but had varied the initials for reasons which were good, but which he preferred to keep to himself.

Before long, the Tasmanian returned and, on Johnson asking him whether everything had gone through all right, he replied "Rather!" "I'm glad of that," said Johnson, "wait for me here; I'll be back in half-an-hour."

When he had disappeared, the Tasmanian was asked by the Queenslander where he had gone to place the order for the shares. "Dashed if I know," confessed the former; "the taxi driver seemed to know all about it; it was a very busy place. When I passed over the order, the clerk said, 'You are buying for a straddler, aren't you?' I did not know what a straddler was, but I said 'Yes'. This is a big deal—£27,000, the clerk told me."

"On what are you taking an option?" asked the Queenslander; "did you read the orders?" "Yes," replied the other, "they were for lire and pesetas, that's all I know." "It sounds like the Arabian Nights," said the Queenslander. "It certainly does," replied his friend; "I've never in my life heard of anything like it." Both agreed that they could lose nothing, and stood to win a fortune.

By this time Johnson had returned. "It's all right," he cried, "it has gone up ten points." Then he gave the others a piece of paper, purporting to be a credit note. "Taxi's down below," he added, "all you have to do now is to go and collect. It has moved ten points. Take this and hand it in and you will receive the money in notes—£27,000 plus the £3,000 deposited."

The Tasmanian con. man left to finish up the deal, while the Queenslander remained with Johnson, who said that there would be a profit of £3,000 for him and the Tasmanian; but the brokers would charge a certain sum for "contango", which would consist of the interest for a fortnight. He further explained that he would have to pay into the broking-house the following morning two sums of £12,500 each which, he alleged, were to keep the credit slips correct. In the ordinary course of business, he pointed out, credit slips would not appear in the books and be compared with the actual credits until late that night or the following morning. By that time he would have sufficient funds to meet them, obtained from the profits on the deal.

The stage was now set for Act 2. The Tasmanian returned and said, "The clerk in the broking-house asked me if I had

a bag or satchel in which to put the notes; as I had not, he said he would have to make a paper parcel of them; when he had got the parcel done up, I mentioned to him that he might as well give me the credit slips. He seemed surprised at this request, and another clerk, to whom he spoke, went away and, on returning, told me that the manager would like to have a word with me. I saw the manager, who said to me 'Before I pay over that money to you, I should like to know whether your account is guaranteed here; if it is not already guaranteed, is there anyone who would guarantee it?' So I gave your name (turning to Johnson) and the manager was quite satisfied, saying 'Oh, yes, I know him well; tell him to come and see me at once'."

On hearing this, Johnson appeared to be very much annoyed, and said angrily to the Tasmanian "What business had you asking for credit slips? You had strict injunctions to do nothing other than what I told you to do. I am the one who has to do all the thinking in this deal. Now I shall have to go and see what I can do; wait here for me."

And off he went, in the utmost haste. Scarcely had he left when the Tasmanian con. man, who appeared deeply chagrined at his own folly, told the Queenslander that he hoped his foolish action had not in any way jeopardised their chances of getting the £3,000; he also said that, while he was in the broking-office, he had noticed immense sums of money, and that it would really be bad luck if, having practically had their money in his pockets, they were to fail at the last moment. He was terribly dejected.

Johnson, on his return, said "I had to do some very quick thinking; just fancy your saying that I would guarantee the amount! Didn't I carefully explain to you that my name must not appear on the Stock Exchange records? Well, I managed to pacify the manager; I told him that you two were from Australia and that, although your drafts had not yet come through, they would be here in the course of a few days; but that you had no right whatever to say that I would guarantee the account. It is a bit of a mess, but per-

haps it is not quite so bad as it might be. I tell you what I shall have to do; I shall have to cable enough money to put each of your banking accounts in funds to the extent of £12,500. Once he has proof that such a sum has been placed to each of your credits, the manager will not make any further difficulty about paying over the £27,000 profit on the deal".

Nemesis was, however, overtaking Johnson and the Tasmanian crook. Little did either they or their intended victim dream that I had been shadowing them, and had already obtained quite sufficient information to show me that the coup was on the verge of being brought off.

When the Queenslander returned to his hotel that night, I took him into my confidence. I well remember the look of amazement which came over his face, for he had quite made up his mind that his two friends were complete strangers to each other when they first met, and that Johnson was a genuine stockbroker. In fact, I had a very hard job to convince him to the contrary. He wanted to take me to see them, and thus convince *me* of *their* innocence; but I persuaded him to await the dénouement the next morning.

It was to come, however, quicker than I expected.

We had, of course, the Tasmanian con. man, who was staying in the same hotel, under observation, and we saw him make a sudden dash for the door, with a suitcase in his hand, but without a hat; he jumped into a waiting taxi, and so did we, securing him after a short struggle.

This was bad luck for me, in one way, because it entailed my losing Johnson who, we afterwards learnt, had been watching the little scene from a safe distance. He decided on a prompt departure from London, and managed to escape abroad.

I was further handicapped by the unwillingness of the Queenslander to come forward, as he wanted to return home, while I could not bring a charge of conspiracy against the Tasmanian, since his accomplice, Johnson, was not in custody. The upshot was that the Tasmanian, who was an

exceedingly cute individual, pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of being a suspected person, and thus got away with the very light sentence of three months' hard labour. He was lucky, for there were three previous convictions for confidence tricks on his record.

Another little con. trick that I was able to frustrate was the plot framed by the "jargoon merchant"; a "jargoon" is an Australian diamond, which can easily pass for a superior article, unless examined by an expert.

One fine summer evening an American con. man, who had decided that temporary absence from New York was advisable, was taking the air on top of a London bus when, seated just in front of him, he spotted a heaven-sent "mug", a typical American tourist, gazing at the sights with open mouth. He happened to turn round and asked the con. man whether they were near Piccadilly, being thrilled to hear a fellow-countryman reply. Of course, the latter offered to act as guide, and a delightful evening was spent. The "mug" retired to bed that night with a confused recollection of what had happened, but with a vivid memory of having met a very pleasant companion, here, so the latter said, on business.

He was.

An appointment had been made for the following day, the con. man having already extracted all the information he required, in the intervals between liquid refreshment, viz. that the "mug" had money to burn, though he had, it seemed, an aversion to gambling in any form; he actually warned the con. man against the wiles of confidence tricksters, and especially against the "Rosary" and similar tricks. The speaker confessed to being rather too alert to be taken in by such methods; the con. man was duly grateful, and promised to be on the *qui vive*. Actually he was reflecting what would be the best way to part the ultra-smart tourist from his "wad".

He eventually settled on a rather original trick. On occasions when he had been in possession of certain pieces of jewellery which he did not want the police to know about,

he had been in the habit of paying visits to Hatton Garden, where he knew certain pavement jobbers who were not likely to turn down a quick deal with no questions asked. Getting into touch with one of these men, with whom he had done business more than once, the con. man, whom I will call Adams, asked him whether he could get hold of any "jargoons"; the jargoon, we have seen, is an inferior diamond from Australia which, when suitably set, bears a colourable likeness to the more expensive article.

"Certainly," replied the jobber, who was a Jew. "Any particular quantity or weight? What do you want them for?" Adams arranged for the Jew to purchase several jargoons and have them mounted as rings and ear-rings.

On meeting the American tourist at the hotel that night, Adams, who appeared very excited, poured into his ear a tale of having had some wonderful luck that day; he had met a man in a restaurant who had shown him some wonderful diamond rings and ear-rings which, it appeared, had been stolen on the Continent. This man was very much frightened of the police, and was willing to dispose of the jewels for a ridiculous sum.

The tourist's cupidity was aroused; it was another case of a "smart" business man wanting to get something for practically nothing. He decided that he could not miss the opportunity of making such a good deal. On his asking Adams how much the other man would be prepared to accept, he was told that he could probably have the jewels for £200.

Jenkins, the tourist, did not happen to have this amount of money with him, so he approached a business friend of his in London, for a loan of £200. The Englishman became inquisitive and wanted to know why Jenkins wanted the money, whereupon the latter told him the story. His friend, quite convinced that the whole thing was a swindle, insisted on taking Jenkins to Vine Street, where the matter was put before me. After hearing the story, I had little hesitation in deciding that the whole thing was a ramp. So I told Jenkins to meet Adams, as usual, that evening and tell him that he

would have the money next day, when a meeting could take place in the English business man's office.

I followed Jenkins and saw him meet Adams, whom I promptly recognised as having been in the company of some very dubious characters on more than one occasion in the West End.

Next day Jenkins was very nervous, and I had a great deal of difficulty in inducing him to play his part. He felt certain that they would shoot or attack him if they suspected that he was leading them into a trap. As a matter of fact, both Adams and the Jew were tough-looking customers. However, in the end the Englishman and I were able, after much persuasion, to get Jenkins to act as a "mug". Still, as he sat in the office, while I and two other officers were secreted in an adjoining room, his nervousness was such that I feared he would give the whole show away at any moment. Perhaps a few quick drinks which I had prevailed on him to take had given him a certain amount of Dutch courage.

At the appointed time in came both Adams and the Jew. They also were very apprehensive and had a good look round the room, even glancing into a cupboard, before they decided to get down to business. With an exaggerated show of caution, the Jew then produced the "stolen" property, consisting of five five-stoned "diamond" rings and a pair of ear-rings, set with large and scintillating "diamonds", all wrapped carefully in tissue paper.

Bargaining commenced, and Jenkins played his part quite well, finally agreeing to pay the sum demanded by the Jew.

At that moment my colleagues and I dashed into the room and arrested the two conspirators before they could do any harm to Jenkins. After we had taken them to the station, I returned to the office, where I found Jenkins sitting down, looking very exhausted and evidently still feeling very nervous. His English friend began to laugh, saying "You can unpack now".

I had not previously noticed anything unusual in the bulk of Jenkins, but, as he stood up and took off his coat, I saw

that he appeared rather swollen; then he removed his waist-coat and other garments, and there came to light wads and wads of newspapers. He had padded himself to prevent shot-wounds or other injuries!

Both prisoners were convicted at the Sessions, while Jenkins went back to America, where he was doubtless able to hold forth with still greater authority on con. men and their wiles.

My readers will have noticed that Jenkins warned Adams against the "Rosary" trick, and no catalogue of the methods of con. men would be complete without an exposure of this time-honoured "ramp", and of its companion, the "Hot Seat".

A particularly daring example of the latter was furnished by a coup staged by a con. man known as "Smiling Jack", who, while listening one day to the Guards' Band at St. James's Palace, managed to scrape up an acquaintance with an American visitor to London. Jack opened the conversation by explaining that he was on a visit to London and came from Rhodesia. After a little adjournment for refreshment, the pair did a round of the sights, talking in the meanwhile of their travels. By the time they parted to return to their respective hotels, the American was congratulating himself on having found such a congenial companion.

Next morning they met again by appointment, and strolled along the Embankment; it so happened that a stout, genial-looking man who was just ahead of them dropped his pocket-book. Jack called the American's attention to this and the latter, hastening forward, picked up the pocket-book and returned it to the stranger, who was most profuse in his thanks, saying "You know, I wouldn't have lost that wallet for all the money in the world; it contains a list of charities given me by my poor old uncle, when he died and left me all his money. I've got £25,000 to pay out for the poor old chap, but I don't mind that, for he left me a quarter of a million; still, my chief trouble is to find someone I can trust to help me distribute the money. I'm a busy man, and

I'm very much afraid I shall have to hand the money over to one of those rascally lawyers. Well, good-bye, gentlemen, I suppose I've been detaining you too long, as it is. But I'm very much obliged to you, and trust we may meet again".

Just as he was turning away, something seemed to strike him, and he looked hard at the honest American who had returned his pocket-book.

"I wonder," he said in a bluff way, "whether you might be able to help me in this little matter, sir. You are evidently an honest man, or you would not have returned me my wallet. As a matter of fact, it contains about £500, and I must say I am extremely grateful to you. Perhaps you could help me to place this money."

The American was a little bewildered by this affable flow of talk, but it was eventually decided to adjourn and discuss the matter further over a quiet whisky-and-soda. "Now," said the owner of the pocket-book, "I'll tell you my name and all about myself."

He produced a cutting from a newspaper, which recorded that fact that William Johnson had been left £250,000 by his uncle, Mr. Ephraim Jackson, of Detroit, and that one of the stipulations of the will was that one-tenth of that sum should be given to charity. Johnson, further, took out a wallet which appeared to be bulging with notes; in reality, only the outside one was on the Bank of England; the others were on the "Bank of Engraving". "Of course," Johnson went on, "before I can hand you over any of this money, I must have some proof of your bona fides." That was where Jack came in. "Well, that's easy enough," he said, putting his hand in his pocket and producing a roll of notes, some of them genuine, but the bulk also on the "Bank of Engraving", "here is £300."

"Now, sir," said Johnson to the American, "if you will give me the same amount, I think I can let you have £5,000 to distribute; what security can you give me?"

The American had not much ready money, but he had a letter of credit, and the other two were good enough to

accompany him to the bank, where it was cashed for £500 in Bank of England notes. The heir to the fortune left for a few moments, and, during his absence, Jack winked to the American and said "Not so bad, eh? I think we could do with a couple of thousand each, what?"

Johnson returned with an attaché case into which he put his wallet and money; then he turned to Jack and invited him to put his £300 in the case, which was done. To prove mutual confidence, Jack was asked to go out and leave his money with Johnson. He did so and, on his return, found the money intact.

Finally, the American was asked to place his money in the case, which the other two also appeared to do. Johnson then said, "I will leave this attaché case with you both while I go and telephone to my lawyer to let him know that I have at last been able to find two honest men to help me in the proper distribution of the fortune".

He seemed to have been gone for quite a long time, when Jack said to the American that he would go and have a look for him; in the meanwhile the American was to keep the attaché case and not part with it to anybody under any pretext.

Out went Jack and, like Johnson, he did not return. You will now understand why this little game is called the "Hot Seat". The American remained in his seat, holding the attaché case, for a long, long time, gradually getting more uneasy, as time went by.

Finally the knowledge that all was not well was borne in on him, and he decided to open the attaché case. It was full of old newspapers.

The morrow saw the two con. men ensconced at a table in a fashionable restaurant in Paris, thoroughly enjoying their apéritifs, and tickled to death at the thought of the American all alone in London on his "Hot Seat".

Their next venture, however, which was an incursion into the "Rosary" business, was not to end so fortunately for them. After they thought the American had returned

home, they themselves came back to London. But, as I knew their methods well, I "arranged" his departure myself, and managed for once to mislead their intelligence man. The American was actually staying at a little hotel in a suburb of London.

Once again the gang began to frequent the usual resorts where "pigeons" were plentiful, and it was not long before their patience was rewarded. One morning the "picker-up" was "doing" the National Gallery when he spotted another pigeon ready for the plucking, again an American. In the usual manner he had soon ingratiated himself with the stranger, posing as a wealthy Australian sheep-rancher on a visit to London. They spent the day together, and, next morning, met by appointment in the Mall.

As they were walking along, a gentleman in front of them dropped a rosary. The con. man called the American's attention to it, and the latter picked it up and restored it to its owner, who, in a rich Irish brogue, expressed his deep gratitude. In a voice overcome by emotion he explained that he would not part with it for a fortune, since it had been blessed by the Pope himself when he had been on a visit to Rome. His name, he said, was John Dillon, and he produced from his pocket an evening newspaper; in the stop-press column of this there appeared a message stating that a case had just been decided in the American Courts in Dillon's favour, whereby, as the only living relative of one Michael Dillon, he had been left £200,000, with the stipulation that he should personally distribute £10,000 to the Church of Rome and £30,000 to the poor; this latter sum had to be given by Dillon to persons who would undertake the distribution, irrespective of creed or nationality; persons who had considerable means of their own, and lived or worked among the poor.

Over a friendly drink, the heir to the fortune again enlarged on his good luck in recovering the rosary. He told his new friends how gratifying it was to meet with really honest people, and said that, provided that they could con-

vince him they were men of means, he would cheerfully entrust them with the distribution of the £30,000. What about it? With becoming modesty, and a great show of reluctance on the part of the first con man, the two agreed. Dillon produced a bulging wallet, containing "notes" amounting, he said to £1,000, and invited the other two to satisfy him of their wealth in a similar manner.

The con. man produced a wad, actually consisting of one genuine £5 note, and a number of pieces of tissue paper, cut to the right size, and secured by a rubber band. The American had to apologise and explain that he only had a few pounds on him, but would draw a cheque for £500 on the American Express Company. The first con. man agreed to accompany him to the office, while Dillon awaited their return in a tea-shop at South Kensington.

Fortunately for the American, I was in very close touch with the American Express Company and my good friend the manager was on the *qui vive* for any attempts to defraud their clients. On the arrival of the two at the office, the con. man said he would wait outside. The manager questioned the American as to why he wanted so large a sum in cash and, when he heard his story, promptly telephoned to me at the Yard.

I lost no time in getting to the American Express Company's premises and gave orders for a dummy packet of notes to be made up, similar to those used by the con. men; these were placed in an envelope and handed to the American, who was told to walk out of the office with the envelope in his hand, so that the con. man could see it.

The latter I had spotted standing in the entrance of the hotel opposite, carefully scanning the faces of the passers-by; he had not seen me, however. The American went up to him and gave him the envelope, which he placed in his pocket. At that moment he caught sight of me and one of my colleagues, and made a dash for a taxicab which was on the move. We were after him in a flash and landed in the taxicab on top of him. Securing him after a short struggle,

we picked up the American and drove on to South Kensington station, only to find that Dillon had flown. I must say that, when our captive saw the envelope opened and found that he had been caught with his own trick, he laughed heartily.

It was some days before I was able to locate "Dillon", and this happened in a curious way. In the first con. man's possession I found the address of a tailor almost next door to Scotland Yard; in fact, I had often had clothes made there myself. Seeing the manager, I got the address of his customer. Calling there early the next morning, I found the heir to the £200,000 in bed. He proved to be an "old client" of mine, and did not seem a bit pleased to meet me again.

At this time, I had quite a collection of attaché cases, the contents of which proved to be nothing but old newspapers. Each of these cases had cost its victim hundreds and, in some instances, thousands of pounds. The arrest of these con. men cleared up the mystery as to the original ownership of some of these cases, at least.

It was now time to bring the original American out of his hiding-place in Suburbia, and you can well imagine the amazement on the faces of the con. men when they were confronted with a victim whom they had imagined to be thousands of miles away in America.

The man who tried to escape in the taxi-cab was sentenced to twenty-one months' hard labour, while "Dillon" got three years' penal servitude.

And now for a story of a little game of golf that went wrong. Your successful con. man has to be something of an Admirable Crichton. It is not enough that he should have a good working knowledge of finance in its various aspects. He must, if he is to prey on the whole gamut of human gullibility, also be a sportsman of parts. For there are other sports, besides horse-racing, which bring grist to his mill. For years past, the leading con. men have made a point of including golf in their repertory, and many of them belong to leading clubs.

The scene of the game I have in mind was in the immediate neighbourhood of London. An expert con. man, who had served with distinction in the War, was living, after the Armistice, in the West End, where he was visited one day by a colleague who was, it seemed, in touch with a likely "pigeon".

This gentleman, whom I will call "A", used to play on a well-known course near London; "B", the second con. man, had made his acquaintance there and had had some good games with him. During these, he had cleverly drawn "A" for information regarding his financial status, which appeared to be all that a con. man could wish for. Now he had come to his friend "C", to enlist his assistance in the "skinning" process.

So a little dinner was arranged in a West End restaurant, during which the two con. men carried matters a stage further. They formed the opinion that "A", though a fool, was unprincipled in matters of finance, and was cunning and suspicious. It seemed therefore the best plan to fix up something which appeared to be crooked and allow him to take a part in it.

The games of golf continued and, in due course, the two con. men told "A" that they were acquainted with a simple-minded individual who not only laboured under the delusion that he could play golf, but was also willing to back his opinion with good money. The man's game, however, was such that he must lose in a foursome if his opponents played reasonably well.

As they had anticipated, "A" simply jumped at this scheme. His companions hinted that they were not too flush and that "A" should put up, say, £2,500, which sum they would get their simpleton friend, with whom they were on very good terms, to cover. A foursome would then be played for these stakes. "A" was obviously only too ready to enter into this shady transaction, and all arrangements were made, the simpleton, actually an accomplice of "B" and "C", being introduced to "A".

When the match took place, "B" partnered the "simpleton" against "A" and "C". The plan was for "C" to play, at the beginning of the game, as well as he could, while "B" was to play as badly as possible.

Unfortunately for their calculations, "C" proved to be in magnificent form, while the golf played by "B" was simply appalling. So the game went on, with everything going against the conspirators. They managed to square at the 18th and went out again. On the re-start "C" said with disgust to "A" "Play the hole, and, for heaven's sake, play it well; keep on the fairway at any cost".

At this crucial stage "B" drove a real screamer, while "C's" ball lay some 30 yard behind. "A" pulled the succeeding shot into the rough—just what he had been told not to do; "C" promptly seized the opportunity of duffing his own shot, so that "B" and the "simpleton" won the hole and the game, and "A's" efforts to pull off a crooked piece of work cost him £2,500!

CHAPTER XIII

MORE "CON." STORIES—THE "DODGER"—WOMEN IN THE GAME—A
RIDE IN THE ROW—A DEAL IN FRANCES—PRAYERS AT ST. PAUL'S—THE
"WONDER"—THE FATE OF THE DISTILLER.

ONE of the most astounding figures in the con. world was undoubtedly that of the "Dodger", a rough, uneducated Colonial who could barely write his own name, and whose personal appearance was most uncouth. Yet this man was successful in worming his way into the best society and adopting, with gratifying financial results to himself, the pose of the rough old Colonial who had made his pile in the gold mines of Australia.

He owned a splendidly furnished flat in Town, and in his own particular "den" photographs and prints of famous race-horses, jockeys and sporting people adorned the walls. With his magnificent car and sumptuous mode of life, he impressed everybody as being a man of practically limitless means.

The air of Australia had become a little unhealthy for him, so he had made up his mind to work the con. game in London and on the Continent; always flying high, he soon made his way to the top of the profession.

One of his last recorded coups in this country was at the expense of a hard-headed business man, whom he despoiled of a small fortune. The victim brought an action in the High Court, but the "Dodger" had the effrontery to brazen it out, attending the hearing of the case and listening to sentence being pronounced against him. During the action he was asked to look at a photograph of himself taken several years before and see whether he recognised it. Taking a careful look at it, the "Dodger" remarked that it was not a photograph of him, but might be one of his victim!

As soon as this action was finished, he disappeared from England, being next heard of in the South of France, where he met a wealthy English ship-owner, then on a vacation at Nice. The "Dodger" was now posing as the holder of extensive interests in some diamond mines.

The usual round of entertainment followed and, confidence having been established, another member of the gang was introduced as a leading American bookmaker. Certain formalities were gone through which resulted in the election of the dupe to a sporting club at Nice. The latter was soon induced to make investments on races. To cut a long story short, it was the old, old tale of the "Infallible Betting System", and the ship-owner was relieved of the sum of no less than £23,000, paid in two cheques only.

The victim called on me at Scotland Yard, and was soon able to identify a photograph of the man responsible for his huge losses. We promptly got into touch with the French police, and they were able to arrest the "Dodger" as he was crossing the frontier into Italy in a luxurious motor car. On searching the cushions of the car, the authorities found a sum of about £20,000 stuffed away there, in notes and securities.

It was a bitter blow for the "Dodger", since his victim went to Paris and preferred a charge against him. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, in addition to having to refund a large portion of his ill-gotten gains to his victim.

An intended victim of the "Dodger" once told me this story at the Yard.

The "Dodger" had picked up a bluff, hearty sea-captain on one of his trips and had invited him to dinner at his flat. After a sumptuous repast, the host carried the sea-captain off to his den to discuss a good cigar and whisky. Once there, the conversation was cleverly steered round to the subject of horse-racing, and the "Dodger" succeeded in getting the other quite interested, so much so that the sailor agreed to put £1,000 into a scheme by which they were to make the usual enormous profits from the infallible

betting system. The supposed victim wrote out his cheque for £1,000, with the "Dodger" complacently watching him.

Suddenly the sailor looked up from his cheque-book and caught a peculiar expression in the eyes of his host. He explained to me that he did not know exactly what it was, but he had a sudden feeling that he was being "done".

He tore the cheque from the book and handed it to the "Dodger", whose hand, he noticed, was trembling in his eagerness to get the cheque. As his host grasped the cheque, the other tore it away from him, gave him a smart blow in the face, knocking him down, and then deliberately tore the cheque into little pieces in front of the amazed con. man's eyes.

He finished up by giving the "Dodger" a sound thrashing, and then cleared out, well satisfied that he had given the old trickster a good lesson. In fact, for some days after that the "Dodger" was not seen in his usual haunts.

It may sound curious, but, in all my long experience of the con. game, I have only once found women taking part in it as principals. Of course, many of the con. men were married and, when they lured their victims to their luxurious flats, their wives, often pretty but usually flashy and laden with expensive jewels, would come on the scene and, posing as perfect hostesses, dispense the best in drinks and cigars, as further evidence of the financial standing of their husbands.

But that was as far as they went, or were allowed to go. With the two women I knew as principals, it was different; both were very good-looking, the elder being just under forty, with a fine figure; in order to make herself appear older, to fit the rôle she was playing, she would have her glossy black hair artistically streaked with grey, and paint in crow's-feet round her eyes, thus adding ten years to her age. Her companion was a slim, tall brunette, with a beautiful face and demure, attractive manner.

Posing as mother and daughter, and with a very small capital, they left the United States to seek their fortune in

Europe. First, they took the precaution of adopting the name of a wealthy American family, which was a household word the world over. They had also provided themselves with extensive and expensive wardrobes, and, without apparent ostentation, generally conveyed the impression that they were ladies of great wealth.

The "mother", though always gracious and condescending, kept a watchful eye on the "daughter". She let it be known that she would never let her child be the victim of a fortune-hunter, but that the man she would eventually marry must be her equal in riches and must be of irreproachable character. So, on the liner coming over to Europe, the young men on board were kept at a respectful distance from the beautiful girl.

But, all the time, the "mother" was using every artifice to obtain information about the movements of the wealthy young men who were attempting to gain an introduction to her dear "child"—they were, of course, in no way related. She was soon able to glean details of these young men's itineraries, but they did not seem to correspond with that of the mother and daughter. Perhaps, however, there might be a further meeting in Paris, Rome, Venice, Milan or Berlin.

"There certainly will be," mentally vowed the mother.

She was a business woman, and drew up her plans with care and accuracy. From Cherbourg the pair went to Paris. Funds were now running low, and it was necessary to replenish them. If they hurried they could, mother thought, reach Rome in time to catch a very desirable youth, son of a wealthy father, with money to burn. So off to the Eternal City, to work the eternal confidence trick. They went to the best hotel, and were apparently dumbfounded to run across there the very young man they were actually pursuing. The youth was of course delighted.

That night mother seemed to relax her vigil somewhat, for, when the youth suggested an adjournment to the balcony after dinner for coffee, she pleaded a headache and said she would go to bed; her daughter might stop, but not for

more than half-an-hour. Thirty minutes is a long time to a clever girl, and, in the glamorous setting of Rome, she used all her wiles. When she finally left him, he was determined to win her at any price.

Next morning, when mother and daughter came down, they found the youth waiting, all stammers and shyness. The psychological moment had arrived, mother decided. She sent a waiter for her letters, but was told that there were none. "This is dreadful," she cried, "there must be; why, my letter of credit is exhausted, and another should have reached me here last night or this morning." The man repeated that there was no mail for her.

"Good heavens, what am I to do?" wailed mother; "here I am in a strange city, with only a few dollars, and I ordered some dresses and hats yesterday." She sank dispiritedly onto a couch, and her daughter went to comfort her. "Never mind, mother," she said, "it will be here to-morrow." Mother, however, was obviously on the verge of tears, and the young man thought that he saw a way of consolidating his position.

"I have plenty of ready money with me," he exclaimed, "can I help you until your letter of credit comes? If a thousand or two thousand dollars will meet your needs, I can let you have them at once." "Oh, no," said the mother, "how could I take money from a stranger?" "Well, I'm not exactly a stranger," went on the young man, with an adoring glance at the daughter; "do let me help you."

Further, but feeble protestations from the mother followed, but at last she consented to accept a loan of 2,000 dollars from the youth, and this was promptly forthcoming. The three of them then spent a pleasant morning together, and parted after lunch, the mother and daughter to visit the bank, the young man to call at the Embassy; they were to meet again at dinner.

Dinner-time came and went, but there were no signs of the two women, and the young man finally made enquiries of the hotel management. To his utter amazement, he learnt

that the pair had left by the afternoon train, saying that they would not be returning.

In this way, the two women toured the Continent, picking up whatever came their way, living always at the best hotels and spending lavishly, but managing to show a good profit. On several occasions the girl accepted proposals of marriage; in a Berlin hotel the love-sick swain let it be known that they were to be married at the great cathedral which looks down the Unter den Linden to the Brandenburger Tor. Needless to say, for three days the bride-to-be was the cynosure of every eye.

Alas, the marriage did not take place; after they had relieved the prospective bridegroom of his bank-roll, mother and daughter vanished once again. In fact, it was only when they came over to England to play their little games that they fell into the toils of Scotland Yard, who sent them in due course to Holloway, where the cuisine and surroundings do not compare favourably with those of the crack Continental caravanserais.

After they had served their sentences, they were escorted to Liverpool, put on board a liner, and sent back to the land whence they had emerged, not so long before, with such high hopes.

One of the leading con. men used, some years ago, to ride in the Row every morning during the season. He was a splendid horseman, having first taken to the saddle at an early age in Australia, when he aspired to become a jockey. One morning, in the Row, he noticed a young lady in difficulties with a very restive horse, and went to her assistance. After that, the two met from time to time in the Row, and eventually they became so friendly that the con. man was introduced to her family. Her father was a gentleman well known in the legal profession, and he thought the con. man a charming fellow. In fact, it was not long before he ingratiated himself with the whole family. Two or three weeks passed very pleasantly, and day by day the young lady and the crook rode together in the Row.

WOMEN IN THE GAME—THE “WONDER”

There seemed to be prospects of the daughter forming a union with the wealthy and charming Australian, who had told her family such wonderful stories of his big ranches and estates in Australia.

Later on, the con. man found that his host was not averse to an occasional mild flutter; so he set to work on the old racing story, with the result that, in less than a week, the legal gentleman had parted with £1,000, while the con. man had departed—on a short visit to the Continent.

When he returned to this country, he took a luxurious suite of apartments in a West End hotel, and joined up with the big syndicate whom I have already mentioned, the men who netted about a quarter of a million in three years; so that, when they were rounded up, I was able to gather in the gallant equestrian as well. He received five years. The legal gentleman was unwilling to appear in Court, but he must have felt considerably relieved that the marriage did not actually take place.

Most people still have a vivid recollection of the inflation of the franc some years ago. Many of us, in fact, will have delightful memories of holidays *de luxe* spent on the Continent as a result of it. Day by day people gambled feverishly on the rise and fall of foreign money. This was an opening of which the con. men were sure to take advantage.

It so happened that about this time a well-to-do Colonial, of Scotch parentage, whom I will call McPherson, and who really ought to have been more careful, left New Zealand to do the “round trip”. On the boat he made the acquaintance of two other Colonials, one giving his name as Thornton, the other as Barker. Barker hailed from Queensland, where he owned a great deal of property, while Thornton was a “wealthy rancher”. They also were doing the round trip and struck up a close friendship with McPherson, who took them at their own valuation.

After reaching London, the trio still continued to meet and went to various places of amusement together; Thornton shortly afterwards transferred to McPherson’s hotel, and the

two paid a visit to the Riviera together; on their return another man, a Mr. Andrews, was introduced as a man who had recently made some very large sums speculating on the franc. Thornton pressed Andrews to allow McPherson and himself to stand in on one of these deals, and, after a considerable amount of reluctance, Andrews finally agreed. He then gave Thornton a ticket of admittance to an establishment calling itself the International Exchange, telling him to go there and take with him a packet containing, he said, £3,000 in notes. The subsequent history of this coup is on all fours with that of the deal in lire and pesetas which I have already recounted, with the exception that the sums were larger.

Thus, a profit of £33,000 was supposed to have been made on the first deal in francs, and consequently the trio would have to put up a guarantee of the same amount. Andrews and Thornton thought that they could put up £18,000 of this between them, and it transpired that McPherson had £15,000 standing to his credit at a bank in Edinburgh; he agreed to draw this out, thus completing the £33,000. The sum was to be transferred to a London bank but, fearing that I might be on their track, the con. men decided to ask McPherson to have the money transferred to the Birmingham branch of the Bank of England; Andrews had to go to Birmingham on business for his firm, and it would be much handier to have the money there.

Next day, all three repaired to Birmingham, where McPherson drew out the £15,000 which had been transferred there, in notes. They went to an hotel, where Andrews and Thornton added to the £15,000 what purported to be rolls of notes to the value of £7,000 and £8,000. Then Andrews proposed to put the whole of the £30,000 in a satchel for Thornton to take to the Birmingham branch of the International Exchange and draw out the alleged £33,000 profit on the deal in francs.

McPherson actually agreed to this suggestion, and Thornton went away with the money. Returning in

about half-an-hour, he said "I have gone in for a fresh gamble, after obtaining the £33,000 profit. So I have taken the liberty, Mr. McPherson, of investing your share of the profit, £11,000, plus the £15,000 you handed me, making a total of £26,000, in this fresh gamble." Turning to Andrews, he added "I have also invested your money and my own in the same speculation."

This meant that over sixty thousand pounds had been invested in another gamble on francs.

McPherson was utterly amazed when he heard what Thornton had to say, and expressed his indignation in no measured terms. It was, however, too late. They had got his money. Andrews had, so he said, to go to Paris on business, and arranged to meet McPherson there. Then ensued a hunt through Europe, to Paris, Brussels and even on to Alexandria, but McPherson never caught Andrews up. Failing in this, he came to the rather tardy conclusion that it was about time he enlisted the services of the Yard. I was detailed to take the matter in hand.

I soon ascertained that Andrews and Thornton had been very busy in Berlin and other Continental towns, changing McPherson's Bank of England notes into foreign currency; of the vast speculation in francs on the International Exchange there were, of course, no signs; neither speculation nor "Exchange" existed.

Andrews and Thornton were, I quickly found out, two Australian con. men, one of them on his first trip here. Him I located at Earl's Court; he was kept under observation for some time; one night he sallied forth and was followed to a flat near by. This I entered and enquired for a Mr. Andrews; but, as I had expected, the lady who was there professed utter ignorance of his whereabouts. Thornton was sitting in an armchair, smoking a cigarette, and pretending to be deeply engrossed in a newspaper. Knowing that he was safe, and feeling sure that the other man was somewhere near, I took no notice of him, but, pretending to be satisfied with the answers I had received, departed.

However, I had the place covered all the time. Later on, when it was quite dark, a man left, with a woman. I was leaning against a lamp-post as he approached me. By his general build and appearance I took him to be the man I was after. As he got abreast of me I saw that he was heavily muffled round the neck, was wearing spectacles, and had taken out a handkerchief which he was holding to his face.

Stepping in front of him, I pulled him up. He made a great show of indignation at first, but soon calmed down. Telling one of my officers to hold him, I went back to the flat, where I found Thornton anxiously pacing up and down. As I entered, I saw his face drop; he took his arrest with a good grace, but was doubtless cursing himself for his stupidity in remaining there, thinking that I had not recognised him on my first entrance.

Here again, owing to the desire of the prosecutor to get back home and the entry of a plea of guilty by the defendants, one of the latter got off with a much lighter sentence—twelve months—than he might otherwise have received.

It will no doubt already have been gathered that much patience, skill and organisation is needed by those whose task is to checkmate the activities of the con. men; those same qualities are needed by the con. man himself; of course, some tricks, such as the "Hot Seat" and "Rosary," do not generally take the same time and trouble to work out as the big coups of the infallible system, for instance.

Now, the con. men operating the "Hot Seat" swindle used to frequent, among other well-known show places, St. Paul's Cathedral, and I remember an incident there which certainly had its humorous side.

We once got on the track of a very clever old con. man, hailing from "down under." Having found out where he was living, we had been following him for several days. The first thing he used to do on leaving home was to go to a post office, where he would dye his grey moustache with black ink!

Then he would wander off to pick up his accomplice.

He would walk about all day long, searching for his prey, and never a bite would he eat until he returned home late in the evening. How we used to curse him as we returned tired, footsore and hungry to the Yard!

In St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey he would kneel down, ostensibly to pray, actually with his eyes wide open and on his confederate, both of them searching for their prey. Meanwhile, I was also on my knees, praying that the time would soon come when we should be able to catch them.

One morning in St. Paul's a rival gang appeared on the scene, also hunting for prey. The chief of the new gang was a gentleman who rejoiced in the name of "Red Herring"; two other members of the gang were known as "Rat" and "Butcher."

I was eventually able, I am glad to say, to arrest the old crook with the dyed moustache.

Once I had disguised myself as an American and, complete with horn-rimmed glasses, guide-book, and chewing-gum, was gazing at the Whispering Gallery, with jaws working correctly, when a con. man, fresh from New Zealand, came up and engaged me in conversation. He was a most efficient cicerone, and his knowledge of the tombs and of the cathedral in general probably excelled my own. He led me gently from the cathedral down to the Strand, with the intention of showing me the other sights of London; all of a sudden, we ran into his confederate, ready and waiting to drop the "rosary," a trick I have already explained. Unfortunately the latter recognised me, thus spoiling the joke rather too soon!

That very clever American con. man, "The Wonder," as he was known to the fraternity, and about whom I shall have more to tell when I come to recount the fate of the distiller, brought off, with his gang, a wonderful coup in a suburb of New York not so long ago.

A well-known Swedish banker had to go to New York

on very confidential business for his firm. He carried with him a letter of credit for many thousands of pounds. The well-organised "Intelligence Bureau" of the con. men got hold of this information, and a decoy was told off to get in touch with the Swede on the boat. Little did the latter think that his charming friend on the liner was "getting a line" on him, and that the rest of the gang were anxiously awaiting the boat's arrival in New York. Travelling alone, he was only too pleased to have such an entertaining companion, and the ocean trip passed all too quickly.

On arrival at New York, the two parted, the Swede's new-found friend vowing eternal friendship and promising to meet him again before long. For some days business claimed the banker's attention, but one day the con. man happened to run across him, quite accidentally, it seemed, and invited him to motor out for some golf at a friend's country residence. There they met with some other members of the gang, all posing as wealthy business men.

Then there came a day when a visit to a race-course was suggested; the banker, having brought off some successful business, declared that a little break would do him good; so off he went to the races with his new friends, in a magnificent limousine, with liveried chauffeur. They had a wonderful day, and all returned home winners of a few hundred dollars. Other visits followed and the banker was getting a taste for the sport. He had not lost so far, and was having quite a good time. His new friends were obviously rich men, and he thought it not unlikely that their company might lead to business.

It did.

One day, in the hotel lounge, one of the con. men pointed out to the banker a man sitting not far away as one of the cleverest of racing men, and a person who had brought off some immense coups. Really in the know and in touch with the best information, he was entrusted with some of the biggest commissions ever worked on the race-course.

After some difficulty, the con. man was able to effect an introduction, and later in the evening the new arrival, whose tongue was then somewhat loosened, told the Swede and his friend that he was actually on the point of bringing off one of the biggest coups of his life. He went so far as to promise to take the two out next day to see his offices, where these big commissions were operated.

Next day they drove out to a big house, standing in its own grounds. Three or four rooms were fitted up as offices. Numerous telephones were installed, and the men operating these were in rooms with closed and darkened windows. Desk drawers were open, showing cheques and banknotes inside, telephones buzzed, and the whole place wore an air of feverish activity that impressed the onlooker with its genuineness. Messages came through in rapid succession from the track and from clients, apparently registering bets; on the walls were boards bearing prices and results.

The Swede visited this "phoney" betting office with his friends on two or three occasions; then word came through to prepare for the big coup of the year. The horse which was to be backed belonged to a certain group which was controlled by the commission agent. A huge amount, running into a million dollars, was to be placed on the animal. The banker was by this time thoroughly impressed, and, on being told he could go in for 50,000 dollars, was only too willing. How could he get the ready money, which was necessary for betting purposes? He produced his letter of credit, and was quickly escorted to his bank, one of the gang actually going in with him to obtain the necessary cash.

Back again to the office of the commission agent, where telephones were still buzzing and operators and clerks hard at work. The banker handed over his money, which was placed in a big safe together with other bundles of supposed bank-notes. Then the party drove back to New York to await the result of the race. This came through

before long, and was highly satisfactory; the horse had won; next day he would drive out to collect his winnings. Elated with his success, the Swede entertained his friends that night at a wonderful dinner; they broke up late, his friends promising to call for him the next day.

After breakfast, the Swede waited for them in the lounge, but no one came; as time sped by he became anxious, and rang up their different hotels, only to be met with the crushing news that they had left that morning. Realising his folly too late, the banker informed the police. They hastened to the betting offices. Another shock; where was all the activity of yesterday? Those buzzing phones were silent; no voices shouting news from the course; only silence, open desks, floor littered with paper, safe open and—empty! The house had only been taken and the bogus office installed a few days before the Swede reached New York.

On his way home from New York, the banker called at Scotland Yard, where I interviewed him. I took him through my "Crooks' Album," and he was soon able to identify "The Wonder" and some of his friends, whom I knew. Then he returned to Sweden, where the news had to be broken to his bank.

Meanwhile, the gang had scattered to the four quarters of the globe. One went to South America, another to Australia, while "The Wonder" did a round trip. I heard of him in Honolulu, then again in India. A warrant had been obtained for his arrest, in case he ever again visited our hospitable shores.

Months passed, and I heard one day that "The Wonder" was operating on the Continent, with Paris as his headquarters. He was nearing our shores, and our port officers were told to be on the alert. One stormy night he crossed with some friends, via the Hook route, hoping to bring off a deal in London. In this, however, he was unlucky, for he was recognised by a Special Branch officer and detained pending my arrival.

He was eventually extradited to New York, and I went up to Liverpool with an American detective to see him safely away from England. As he boarded the liner, he said to me, "Good-bye, Leach, it's too bad to leave your wonderful country," adding, "Hell, this is the first time I've had to make this trip second class!"

I now have to tell the most amazing tale of the credulity and gullibility of a business man which has ever come to my notice. I have called it "The Fate of the Distiller." For the hero, or rather the victim, was a well-known distiller of (rendering this strictly truthful story still harder to swallow) Scotch nationality.

There are times when the old proverbs simply don't apply, and this is one of them. Far from being "shy," our friend the distiller came back and back again to be "bitten," with a persistence and a touching faith in human nature which might have been better employed elsewhere.

This case certainly contains the most amazing series of swindles I have ever had brought to my notice, and it is probably, in its totality, the biggest individual coup brought off by con. men.

For, astounding as it may seem, the victim was defrauded time after time, until he had parted with a fortune—about £150,000. On several occasions this gullible old man, having parted with large sums, came to the police for advice. We told him that he was in the hands of a band of International crooks, but, in spite of this, he refused to give us any help whatever in arresting and convicting the swindlers, but went back to them again and again, to be swindled of more thousands of pounds.

This is the story—wildly fantastic, utterly true.

The old Scotsman was staying at an hotel in Droitwich, undergoing a cure, when there appeared on the scene a dapper Australian, who quickly ingratiated himself with the old gentleman, interesting him by stories of his own travels and wealth. The friendship grew and, on hearing that the Australian was returning to London, the distiller made

arrangements to meet him there. There the distiller was introduced to more of the "boys" at a luncheon party given at a West End club; over the coffee and liqueurs the conversation, which had been on general topics, turned to horse-racing.

The distiller, who may have known all about whisky, was lamentably ignorant of the Sport of Kings; still, he listened intently to one of his new friends who had been introduced as an Irish trainer of race-horses.

The gang were feeling their way very carefully, and had no intention of rushing matters; they had laid their ground bait very cleverly, and the distiller was left alone for a month or so, during which time he no doubt often thought of his new-found friends who, as a matter of fact, were keeping a very careful watch on him. The gang waited until the distiller paid another visit to London, and then it was not long before there was a chance meeting with his Australian friend, at which both men expressed their satisfaction.

The distiller invited the other to lunch and, during the meal, the Australian referred to their friend the Irish trainer, who had, it seemed, received some valuable information about one of his horses which was running in Ireland. The Australian intended to back it for some thousands and wishing to do his host a good turn, suggested that he might like to have £4,000 on it. The distiller declined, as he was not a bit interested in racing. So impressed was he, however, with the evident wealth and standing of his friend that he was eventually persuaded to place the bet. The horse won, he was told, and his winnings—£4,000—had been placed to his credit. This little coup was followed by an invitation to the Australian to visit the distiller in Scotland, and he duly arrived in an impressive limousine, complete with luggage and golf-clubs, but minus the £4,000. For con. men never "part." Both men played a good game of golf, and the days passed pleasantly, the charm of the guest allaying any half-formed suspicions his host might have entertained.

Came the time when horse-racing again became the topic of the hour. More marvellous information had been received from Ireland. It would be sheer madness not to invest a really considerable sum, say £10,000 to £20,000. There was no possibility of loss, since the money would be "hedged" at the right moment. The old story again.

Remembering how easily he had won the first £4,000—which, by the way, he had yet to see—the distiller, though he thought long and hard, finally nibbled at the bait. How could he entertain suspicions of so eminent and wealthy a guest? He thought that the Australian was delicately taking an opportunity of returning his hospitality. So he decided to have £10,000 on the horse, not troubling to ask its name or when and where it was running.

On the termination of his visit, the guest took his departure, after lavishly tipping the servants. Some days later he sent a telegram to the distiller, saying that the horse had unfortunately lost, that it had been impossible to hedge the bet, and asking for a cheque for £6,000, which was promptly sent. This cheque represented, of course, the £10,000 the distiller had lost, minus the £4,000 for the first transaction.

The gang had now discovered that they had got hold of the kind of pigeon which only flits past once in a lifetime, and it was decided to pass him on to another gang, on sharing terms. A month or so later, therefore, while the distiller was staying at an hotel in Torquay, he made the acquaintance of a rich American and his friend, who were also staying there for the benefit of their health. It is unnecessary to detail the preliminary steps which culminated in a visit to London and to Kempton Park races. Unfortunately, the horse which the distiller had been persuaded to back on this occasion, for a mere trifle of £2,000, was unlucky enough to lose by a neck. The distiller, who again not troubled to ask the name of the animal, parted with his £2,000 without a murmur; then he left London, but the gang still had him under careful observation.

The scene now shifts to Harrogate, where the distiller was undergoing one of his periodical cures; here he met another member of the gang, who also played his part to perfection. Horse-racing, as a subject of conversation, was strictly taboo. For the gang, not certain whether the distiller realised that he was being swindled, were anxious to allay any suspicions which might have been aroused, and were playing their game with real artistic skill. Again the distiller returned home to Scotland, and he took his new friend with him; he also played a good game of golf. A week or so passed quietly on the links, and then the swindling started again.

A visit was paid to Stockton races, where the distiller was mulcted of £3,000, which he again paid up like a man.

Months passed by, and the distiller had almost forgotten both his friend and his losses when, one day in the late autumn, he received a letter from one of the "boys", saying that he felt terribly run down and suggesting a visit to the former's estate. The kind-hearted Scotsman promptly asked him to come up, and a pleasant fortnight was spent, at the expiration of which a communication was received from the man with the inside information, written from Glasgow, where he happened to be on business.

It so happened that the distiller also wanted to go to Glasgow on business, and he took his friend over with him. At dinner the subject of horse-racing was brought up once more. The information this time was gilt-edged, and the distiller would more than recoup all his former losses, if he decided to join in. It seems incredible, but the distiller did join in, with the usual result. Still more incredible is the fact that even this further set-back did not impair his faith in human nature. Possibly he still hoped to get back some of his losses.

At any rate, a few months later, he was walking in the West End of London, when he ran across one of the gang, an American, who insisted on taking him to lunch at a most exclusive hotel.

This luncheon again ended disastrously for the distiller, for he dropped no less a sum than £21,000, as a result of a visit to Doncaster races.

Since the old gentleman met his losses with such scrupulous honesty, it was felt that some plan must be worked out to give him what he might believe to be a chance of recouping himself. The Cesarewitch was then looming on the horizon, and a meeting took place in Glasgow between the distiller and some of his London friends. There was one man present whom he had not met before, and who did not seem to have had any prior connection with the others.

This time the old "hedging" swindle was worked again, and I feel that I am beginning to put a strain on the credulity of *my readers* when I ask them to believe that, so well was the trap baited, the distiller actually wagered another £12,000. Then he returned home, it being arranged that the result of the race should be telegraphed to him. In order that no suspicion that he was gambling on horse-races should get abroad, it was arranged that the telegram should be coded. On the day of the race, he received the following terse wire:—"Investment total loss."

Full of concern, he dashed off at once to London, to the office of the commission agent. Armed with a letter of personal guarantee which the supposed bookmaker had given him, and threatening to consult his lawyer, he was at last beginning to awaken to the true character of his "friends". Much talk and explanation followed, but, in the end, the distiller agreed to accept the return of £5,000, and handed over a letter saying that he was satisfied with the whole transaction.

Still the gang did not call a halt; other swindles followed, though these were of a different nature, and were worked by another member of the gang. The distiller's thousands were now lost in company flotations, which seemed to be dogged by persistent ill-fortune.

So the despoiling of the distiller went on, and word was passed on from gang to gang, each netting their thousands.

Perhaps I may ring down the curtain on this first act of the drama by saying that, in the short space of twelve months, the con. men had bled the distiller of just on £75,000!

Then there came a lull in the proceedings. It was nearly two years later when, leaving the Yard one day for a stroll up West with my colleague in the chase after the con. men, Detective-Inspector Percy Smith, a messenger came up with a telegram for me. Tearing this open, I read, "Please meet me at my club at once." "Who do you think this is from, Percy?" I asked my colleague. "I've no idea," he replied; "who is it from?" "Who but our old friend the distiller?" I said. "Bring along the album; I have a feeling that the 'boys' have caught him again."

On entering the club, we found the old gentleman nervously pacing up and down the smoking-room. The hand he extended in greeting was shaking. "Ah, Mr. Leach," he said, "it's very kind of you to be so prompt. Come over here and sit down." I opened the ball by asking him point-blank, "How much have they had from you this time, sir?"

Rather taken aback, "How did you know?" he countered. "Well," he went on, "it's no good blinking the fact; they *have* caught me again; it is terrible—£25,000 this time. I really can't believe there is anything wrong, but I just wanted your advice." I then asked him to give me their names, which he did. Then I produced the album and, pointing to a certain page, asked "Do you recognise anyone here?"

To cut a long story short, it appeared that the distiller had been "tipped off" to an American gang, who were operating the "Stock Exchange Swindle", about which I had something to say earlier on. Such a good "client" was worth a trip across the ocean, and the forerunner of the gang had arrived at Harrogate, to take a cure, a few days after the distiller had arrived there. It was an easy matter to check the movements of the old gentleman. The man from America was none other than "The Wonder", hero of the "phoney" betting-office ramp.

On this occasion he maintained his reputation, and it was not long before he had insinuated himself into the good books of the unsuspecting old Scotsman. There soon followed the almost obligatory cordial invitation to pay a visit to the distiller on his native heath, for a few games of golf and a change of scenery before the return voyage to New York.

"The Wonder" lost no time in introducing certain friends of his, who also hailed from the States, and, in the course of conversation, it was disclosed that one of them was a man operating in a big way on Wall Street.

This man was only in England on a holiday, but, even so, news reached him of important operations by his syndicate which, of course, he dare not disclose. However, one day, he yielded to the persuasion of "The Wonder", and rather reluctantly agreed to let certain of his friends come in on some financial operations which he had to carry out in this country, with the result that some hundreds of pounds were invested and, in the space of a few hours, a good margin of profit had resulted.

But a day came when everything went wrong, and the distiller, who had been inveigled into investing £25,000 in the purchase of stock in an oil company which existed only in name, had to say good-bye to yet another substantial slice of his now quickly-shrinking fortune.

Thus finished Act 2.

An even longer interval was to elapse then between Acts 1 and 2 before Act 3 and the climax of the drama came along. When it came, it brought tragedy with it.

Once again, the gangs had laid their traps for the old man, and this time they robbed him of another £20,000 by selling him faked stock.

It was the last straw; a few days later the dead body of the distiller was found in a lake near to his home.

CHAPTER XIV

MORE "CON." STORIES—THE "BARON"—THE "CAPTAIN"—CATCHING A TARTAR—I AM TAKEN FOR ONE OF THE "BOYS"—IDIOSYNCRACIES OF CON. MEN—THE VARSITY MAN—A LITTLE RACING STORY.

AN important capture I made was one which took place not long after the affair of the "decoy captain", which I related in an earlier chapter, and in which the star rôle was played by a personage known as the "Baron".

During the seemingly endless task of watching the various rendezvous of the con. men, both by day and by night, we had cast our eyes on one gang who were frequenting a well-known hotel. The "Baron" was staying there and was entertaining lavishly and spending money like water.

One of his most frequent visitors was a man I had met some years before, then a strikingly handsome man, an Australian who went by the name of "Algy". The War, however, had left its mark on him in the shape of a missing leg, while the once dark, curly hair was now well lined with streaks of grey. We soon discovered that Algy was living in excellent style in a charming flat just off Berkeley Square.

Sumptuous dinners, with unlimited champagne, were the order of the night, both at the hotel and at the flat, and these would be followed by little games of cards, in which the various pigeons whom the gang had in tow would be invited to participate. Then, in the company of the supposedly wealthy Australian ranchers and millionaires, the artless Double Ace game would be started.

It took us some time to locate the various members of the gang, and also to find a pigeon who had been plucked; but one night we saw the gang dining together in the hotel with a stranger, and afterwards followed the party to the flat.

Next morning we heard from the victim the old story of how, after he had gone for the pool and lost, a member of the gang calmly plunged and took the whole amount. Then followed the formality of handing over I.O.U.s. and cheques. It did not take us long to prove that the cheques given by various members of the gang, which we traced on their arrest, would never have been met.

I well remember going to the flat armed with the warrant for the arrest of the four men who comprised the gang. On enquiring of the porter for "Algy" or the "Captain", as he was also known, I was told that he had just gone upstairs with the "Baron"; on entering the flat, I recognised the latter as one of the crowd. He tried to bluff, but was obviously very relieved that we had not called for him. I told him that his time might come later, and it did, but that is another story.

We arrested the "Captain", who seemed to treat the matter as a joke, especially the warrant, which only mentioned an amount of £5 obtained by conspiring to cheat and defraud at cards.

Soon afterwards, my colleagues located two more members of the gang, who, with several others, were leaving a flat off Regent Street. One of these men was the well-known con. trickster "Australian Fred".

Another member of the gang, an American and a one-time jockey, got away, and I was unable to trace him until years later, when we met one afternoon in the Strand. By that time he had evidently forgotten the incident, but my memory was better, and I took him along with me.

The "Captain" was let out on bail; he obtained a false passport and fled the country. He met with many adventures in various parts of the world, until, one fine day, I happened to see him in the lounge of a West End hotel, in company with another well-known con. man, whom I had actually gone to arrest.

The "Captain" greeted me quite cheerfully. "Hullo, Leach," he said, "so you've come for me at last." Thus I was able to kill two birds with one stone.

Sharp sentences of two years' hard labour were meted out to "Australian Fred" and his confederate.

It is on record that, on one occasion, the "pigeon", a well-to-do business man, was so impressed with the "Captain" and the "Baron" that he accompanied them to the flat, buoyed up by the promise that the latter would invest a large sum of money in his company. But it was a case of diamond cut diamond.

Both the "Baron" and the business man were out to get the best end of the deal, with the result that the former spent a lot of money on entertaining and got nothing in return, while the latter had some very entertaining evenings, but kept his bank-roll intact.

One of the most daring efforts made by con. men was when, some years ago, they actually attempted to bluff the late Lord Birkenhead, who was then on a holiday in Maderia.

Two men took their seats, one evening, in the dining room of the hotel where he was staying. Dressed in ordinary evening clothes, they were in no way noticeable. One of them, with bland affability, approached Lord Birkenhead after dinner, and challenged him to engage in a spelling competition for the sum of £100, his lordship being, as the con. man put it, "a great student of the English language".

Lord Birkenhead's reply was indeed a model of succinct English prose.

"Sir," he said, "I have never met you before. I do not want ever to meet you again. You forced yourself upon me, and I refuse to allow you to do that, or to force upon me any competition in which you may think yourself able to overcome a stranger. But, if you wish to lose £100, I will dive, for that sum, from the top spring-board of the swimming pool to-morrow morning at 11 o'clock against all comers."

The con. man was so taken aback that he accepted the contest.

At eleven next morning an expectant crowd gathered round the swimming pool—but the con. men did not put in

an appearance. They did not do so until the evening, when the one who had accepted the challenge was invited to come and pay his forfeit in one of the public rooms of the hotel. The two arrived, genial and still boastful. All their bluff and attempts to evade the issue availed them nothing for, in a few curt sentences, Lord Birkenhead completely crumpled them up.

Denounced as crooks, they were warned that, unless they paid a debt which they owed to a waiter within half an hour, they would be exposed and driven from the island. Then they collapsed, and begged to be allowed to depart from Madeira in peace.

Here is a little tale against myself, for I was once taken for a con. man.

After the dramatic trial of the big gang, who had cleared up a quarter of a million in three years, at the Central Criminal Court, which I recounted earlier on, I was feeling thoroughly run down, and went to recuperate at Brighton.

I was an absolute bag of nerves when I arrived at the hotel, not wishing for company or conversation; for the first three or four days I dreaded meal-times, when I was forced to meet people and be reasonably polite.

I had noticed that, every evening after dinner, the men adjourned to a card-room for bridge, while the ladies indulged in a quiet little game of "Nap", a pastime for which I happened to have a penchant.

One evening, as I sat sipping my coffee and feeling thoroughly miserable, one of the ladies said to me, "Oh, Mr. Leach, do you play cards?" In a very non-committal manner I confessed to my weakness for "Nap", and was promptly the recipient of a pressing invitation to join the ladies at this game. I was not sorry, after all, to find some means of reviving my interest in life, and agreed to join the magic circle.

"We play Misere and Double Misere and Double Double Misere, Mr. Leach," coyly admitted the lady; "do you understand it?" I confessed that I did, and then, as an after-

thought, she added, "Oh, and we have a kitty". "That is quite all right," I replied, and the game started.

My luck was simply amazing and, having had a little experience among my colleagues in the gentle art of "Nap" in which "Misere" is embodied, I was soon christened the "Misere King", because of my frequent calls in this direction, which usually resulted in the "kitty" coming my way.

On several occasions when the gentlemen passed through the room on their return from bridge, I noticed that they paid me quite a lot of attention; on more than one occasion enquiries were made as to how the "Misere King" was getting on, and how many times the "kitty" had come my way.

My rest-cure finished, I left Brighton, and the little games of "Nap" had quite faded from my memory when, one day, I chanced to meet, outside the Central Criminal Court, one of the gentlemen who was staying at the Brighton hotel at the time of my visit there. We renewed our acquaintance over a quiet apéritif at Pimm's, hard by, and I then took the opportunity of telling him what my official position was, a matter which had, of course, not come to light at Brighton.

He promptly burst into a roar of laughter. When he had recovered I asked him what was the cause of this unseemly mirth. "Why, Leach," he spluttered, "we used to think you were one of the 'boys' when you played cards at the hotel, that's why we used to watch you so closely each night when you were playing with the ladies."

The lure of the con. game is undoubtedly due to two important factors, easy money and the glorious uncertainty of its "Get-rich-quick-Wallingford" staging.

I have often known of con. men gambling their last pounds as bait for a "sucker", especially at the "Hot Seat" game.

I have also known them to "touch" for thousands and, in a very short while, to be "on the rocks" through trying to spot the winner on the Turf.

One day, many years ago, I was on special duty at Lewes Races and, on sitting down to lunch, noticed a gentleman

opposite regarding me with a fixed stare. I hardly recognised him at first; he had undergone such a change. The last time we had met was when I had had to ask him to accompany me to a West End police station; he was then immaculately attired in correct morning dress. Yet another Australian, he was at that time a fine, tall, exceedingly handsome man and would have passed muster in any Society crowd.

He very forcibly intimated that I was mistaken, and that my suspicions as to his intentions in the Cockspur Street offices of a certain well-known shipping company were most unfounded, and that I was running a very grave risk in arresting him. However, it had to be done; but, at the trial, his solicitor got him out of serious trouble by saying that, if his client were given a chance, he would go to Canada and there start life afresh. The magistrate, in view of the defendant's previous clean record, agreed to this, and a smile came over the prisoner's face, which quickly faded away when the magistrate went on to say, "and I make it a condition that the detective in charge of the case see him on board the boat at Liverpool."

Our journey there is fresh in my memory; the conversation certainly did not lead me to believe that he was going in for farming or any other hard work; when we arrived on the quay, he artlessly remarked, "Well, good-bye, Leach; there's no need for me to keep you waiting about until the boat sails." I did wait, of course, until the liner was out in mid-stream, when he sportingly waved me a farewell from her deck.

Now here he was at Lewes Races, but he did not cut the same debonair figure as of yore. Still, he seemed to be well provided with funds, for I subsequently watched him pass down the front line of Tatt's, with the leading pencillers touching their hats and booking his bets; and he was betting in hundreds. He had quite a good day, I believe.

Well, as I have said, with the con. men, it is easy come, easy go.

Some of them have long retired from the game and are to-day moving in quite good circles, whither their past has not yet followed them.

One, for instance, is doing well in India. Years ago he was arrested in a raid on a flat near Buckingham Palace, to which officers of crack regiments were nightly lured and swindled. Another went into the real estate business and picked up a fortune. When I last heard of him he was entertaining a party on his yacht in the South of France. His *pied-à-terre* in Paris was a sumptuously-furnished flat. The yacht in question had, I have been told, on one occasion been selected as the scene for the "trimming" of a well-known sporting peer, who was invited to join a select party at cards. In the upshot, the peer, who had been warned at the last minute of the company he was keeping, did not put in an appearance.

Two others I have in mind turned their attention to land development schemes, and made a modest fortune. Another became a hotel proprietor in the South of England, and the only time he was to be seen with his old pals was at an annual trip to the Derby, but he was very careful not to try and "spot a ring" in their company.

"Doc." Owen, one of the leading American grafters, fled from England at the time when I was so busy in the West End, and the next that I heard of him was that, in some scene at an hotel in Havana, he fell down the stairs and broke his neck. The "Doc." was known for the exceptional brand of cigars he was invariably to be seen smoking.

A few years later, another con. man, who had decided to transfer his operations to the Continent, was found dead in some street excavations at the point where the Boulevard Haussmann now joins the main boulevards. His photograph was identified by an Englishman who had recently been swindled in Paris by the dead man and other members of his gang out of £2,000, by means of a confidence trick. The mystery of his death was never satisfactorily cleared up.

It is thought that a dispute arose over the sharing of the booty and suspicion rested on the gang he was associated with.

Another American con. man, who had been lost sight of for several years, recently came to light in connection with some big Government scandals in the United States.

One of the most famous of con. men was the notorious Gerald Chapman, the "Monocled Bandit", who always sported an eyeglass, dressed in the height of fashion, and frequented the most exclusive hotels. He made several visits to England, but he never actually fell foul of the Yard. He finally went to the electric chair in 1926, for shooting a detective in a desperate effort to escape arrest.

"Schultz the Swede", another international con. man hailing from America, was shot dead in Michigan when attempting to make his escape after shooting at and killing a detective.

It may be interesting to give a short list of the "noms de guerre" favoured by some of the con. men with whom I came in contact.

"Military Brown."	"Little Ernie."
"Honey Grove Kid."	"The Count."
"Be Jasus Kid."	"Dave the Liar."
"Californian Kid."	"Chicago Solly."
"The Fireman."	"Dan the Dude."
"Abie the Waiter."	"Cyclone Jarvis."
"Worcester Red."	"The Big Swede."
"Pretty Sid."	"The Little Rat."
"The Indiana Wonder."	"Yellow Pete."
"The Red Herring."	"Rabbit."
"Australian Jack."	

All of these men hailed from the United States or from Australia.

Now for a little bridge story, a clever swindle in the investigation of which I was personally engaged.

This took place at a resort in the south-west of England, and the victim was cleverly inveigled by the con. men into "just a little friendly game for nominal stakes".

The stakes actually were nominal at the outset, but not so at the finish, as will be seen by the following description of the play, the game being ordinary Bridge.

The victim, at the crucial point in the game, held the following hand:—Hearts: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10 and 2. Clubs: Ace, King, Queen. Diamonds: Ace and King. Spades: 6 and 7.

The dealer, who declared Hearts, held: Hearts: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Spades: Ace, King, Jack, 10, 9 and 8.

The player opposite the declarer held a long suit of Clubs and other insignificant cards.

The victim's partner held a long suit of Diamonds and the vital cards in Spades, Queen, 4 and 2.

The dealer having called "Hearts", the victim doubled. Re-doubling then took place about three times, whereupon the victim protested, saying that he had pointed out that he did not care to play for high stakes, although he felt that, in this case, he was bound to win. His partner, however, went on doubling without any apparent justification, up to 14 times, when the amount involved was over £300.

In the upshot, the victim, despite his apparently unbeatable hand, lost the game, because he trumped the Jack of Spades when led by the declarer.

The distribution of the cards was of course extraordinary, and would not happen once in a million times in actual play. Naturally, the cards had been "stacked" for this particular hand, this little operation being fairly easily carried out under cover of the general hilarity induced by numerous rounds of drinks.

When the matter was reported to me, I made investigations on the spot, having already recognised the victim's three acquaintances as old "clients" of mine. They had evidently got wind of my arrival, for I found that they had

flown. I was on their track, however, and could put my hands on them whenever necessary.

Unfortunately, as so often happens in cases of this kind, the victim proved unwilling to face the publicity of a prosecution, so the con. men got away with it on this occasion.

It will have been seen that, though the con. man lays his traps all over the world, it is usually London that is chosen as the scene of the final act of the drama. The Metropolis is the clearing-house of the world, in other senses besides the banking one.

The groundwork and preparations for these spectacular coups often take months, even a year. Hundreds, even thousands of pounds will be spent in "ground-bait", and there is always the possibility that this money may be lost through a false or hasty step on their part arousing the suspicion of the intended victim.

When their plans do go astray, which is oftener than might be supposed, they simply smile, and turn their attention to another "pigeon". In fact, your successful con. man must obviously be endowed with an intelligence, an experience, a knowledge of human nature, and a wide, if necessarily somewhat superficial knowledge of most subjects, which would certainly ensure a large measure of success if applied along orthodox commercial lines. Again, surely they are well fitted to shine on the legitimate stage, where their ability to sustain almost any rôle at a moment's notice ought to render them valuable acquisitions. Their intellectual agility and dexterity in mental conflict, where it is literally a battle of wits, should surely render them particularly well equipped to shine at the Bar or in politics.

But no, they prefer the thrill of the chase, forever battenning on the cupidity of their fellow-men, working on the fatal greed for easily-acquired wealth which renders so many business men their easy prey. Once the interest of the victim has been aroused, his passions are played on with such masterly skill that he becomes utterly oblivious of any element

of risk, and rarely awakes from his delusion until it is too late.

It is a Jekyll and Hyde existence that your first-flight con. man leads. Apparently, the wealthy business man, or retired financier, with his luxurious house, standing in its ample grounds, with a retinue of servants, a stud of cars and all the trimmings that money can buy, he is actually the super-crook roaming, during the "plucking" season, the four quarters of the globe, on the prowl for whom he may devour.

His lady decoy is beautifully turned out, and of charming manners and appearance. It is a notable fact, however, that con. men rarely allow their progeny to follow in their own profession. Their home-life is often a model of all the virtues, and the greatest care is devoted by them to the upbringing of their family who, in many cases, are totally unaware of the calling actually pursued by their father.

The hardest blow which my arrest of one well-known con. man meant to him was the fact that his downfall and the resultant publicity would entail the removal of his son from a famous public school, where he was having a brilliant career. Fortunes have been lavished by con. men in an attempt to bring members of their family back to health, and, generally speaking, nothing is too good for those near and dear to them.

They are almost invariably great gamblers, and the large fortunes so easily acquired from the "Pigeons" find their way, only too often, into the hands of the bookmakers or of the "croupier" at some fashionable Continental resort. After all, they say to themselves when their pile dwindles before their eyes, we can easily make another one.

I remember one Derby meeting at Epsom, when certain of the top-notchers at the con. game were operating in the ring. It was a year when the favourite was thought to be unbeatable and stood at a very short price.

These men had recently despoiled a gentleman who, not wishing to incur publicity, refused to prosecute. With the money they had extracted from him, they plunged up to

the hilt on the favourite, which was beaten. I was watching one of them during the race. His face was red with excitement and, with words and gestures, he urged his choice on to win. As the horses neared the winning-post it became obvious that the favourite had no chance whatever; he collapsed into his seat in the stand, going deathly white. I really thought he was going to die. A stout man, he had his hand to his heart. Going up to him, I expressed my concern, saying "You are looking very bad". Looking up at me he said, "'Bad' is not the word; I'm 'out'; that race cost me £6,000, every penny I possess".

Yet, only a few weeks later, we heard that he had "touched a mug" for nearly £10,000!

A con. man whom I once arrested told me that he had been on his way to borrow a few pounds from a friend, as he was completely "broke". As he was passing along Cheapside a Colonial asked him the way to a certain place; the con. man not only directed him thither, but so improved the shining hour that, less than a day later, he had actually defrauded the Colonial of nearly one thousand pounds by means of the "Rosary" trick. With the proceeds of this little coup he repaired to the Continent where, in a very short space of time, he was able to land another deal, in foreign currency this time, for some thousands of pounds, with the help of a gang he had met there.

Such is the path of the con. man; riches one day, poverty the next; but they never worry unduly; for they thoroughly believe in the American dictum that "a sucker is born every minute".

Two con. men once set a trap for a clergyman, but he was not quite so green as they had imagined. The twain had become members of a West End club to which the reverend gentleman also belonged. One of them thought it possible that the Vicar—he was the incumbent of a well-known parish on the outskirts of London—might not be averse to a little flutter on a horse, and determined to sound him. So he invited him to lunch at a well-known restaurant in the

Strand. During luncheon, the Vicar was introduced to the other con. man, who was posing as a rich grazier from New Zealand.

The latter, who had as a matter of fact served with the Australians during the War, produced some Army papers, during the meal, and asked the Vicar if he would be good enough to sign them, which he did. The con. man then tried to press a fee of £2 on the Vicar, but the latter of course declined, whereupon he was asked to devote the sum to some good works in his parish. After this, the racing scheme was gradually broached, but met with little response from the Vicar who, after thanking his hosts for an excellent luncheon, gave them his blessing, rose—and took his departure.

“Leach,” said an ex-Varsity man to me one day, “when your gentleman becomes a crook, he is a very bad man indeed. He has lost all sense of decency and does not mind to what depths he falls.”

The speaker had himself undergone the fall of which he spoke; he gained his living by his wits, making a speciality of decoying young undergraduates to moneylenders and to little games of cards. Only the day previously I had seen him, in company with four other men, in a fashionable restaurant in Piccadilly. They were all public-school men, and had been to the 'Varsity. One had already made acquaintance with the inside of a prison. Two were being tutored by a well-known criminal who had served a long term of penal servitude for forgery, while another of their acquaintances was a well-known “cat” burglar.

They were well aware that I was engaged in cleaning up the West End at that particular time, and my appearance on the scene was sufficient warning to them to decide them to call off a little coup that I was told they were contemplating—a big jewel robbery at a mansion in the country.

Actually, it was only a few months later that I arrested three of them for an amazing conspiracy to obtain £30,000.

I thought of the words spoken to me in Piccadilly by the ex-Varsity man some time later, in connection with the sinister flat in Knightsbridge, to which so many victims were lured, and where an ex-Varsity man was the decoy. One morning he sauntered forth, in search of prey, immaculately dressed as usual. His luck proved to be in, for he ran across a man who had been at college with him. No thought of honour or *esprit de corps* was allowed to stand in the way of his projects; the cool, calculating mind of the crook was at work. There followed an invitation to dinner at the charming flat where the decoy had been installed by two clever Australian con. men.

On his arrival there, the new-comer was introduced by the decoy to the two Australians, who were posing as rich ranchers, on holiday in England. The dinner that followed was perfect, and was liberally accompanied by choice wines. In due course, a little game of cards was suggested and the victim, never suspecting that his old college chum might be a cardsharp, willingly agreed to join in the alluring "Double Ace".

In the grey dawn of the following morning, a considerably befuddled young man was led to the door of the flat by the man he had once played cricket with, the poorer by £3,000, for which he had given I.O.U.s. These I.O.U.s. were found by me when I arrested the gang later on.

The young man who had been fleeced never dreamed that the game was not straight, and fancied that he had incurred a debt of honour which must be met. In fact, he was on the point of meeting it on the very day when I effected the arrest of the three conspirators, and you may imagine his disgust and amazement when I revealed to him the true state of affairs. Even then, he seemed to find it hard to believe that a gentleman could sink as low as his old chum had done.

To close these reminiscences of the wiles of the con. men, I may perhaps choose another racing story, for it is an excellent example of a coup worked with such skill that, not

only did it bring in the harvest it was intended to reap, but the victim remained until the end, and indeed after, in complete ignorance that any trick had been played on him.

Smith owned several racehorses; he also trained them. This accounted for the fact that he never succeeded in fulfilling his ambition of leading in a winner. He was a well-to-do man, having many lucrative investments, as well as a big estate in the West Country. But his whole life was centred on his horses, and he had a profound belief in his own ability as a trainer.

Thus, his bad luck failed to damp his ardour, and he kept on with his own methods of training, which clearly stamped him a novice at the game, as well as costing him many hundreds of pounds.

His cheery "country squire" countenance could be seen at most of the meetings during the season, and it was not long before he was marked down for plucking by the con. men.

One Spring Meeting some of the con. men happened to be staying at the same hotel as Mr. Smith, and took the opportunity of renewing an acquaintanceship which one of their number had previously scraped with him; this man had made a report on Smith's little weaknesses, including the fact that he betted only in small sums. At this particular time, he had been "enjoying" his usual run of "bad luck", so the con. men commiserated with him, assuring him that it must soon turn.

A few months later, when they met again, Smith was still unsuccessfully trying to land a winner, and they thought that the time had come to act. Three of them undertook the business, each of them separately engaging a suite at the best hotel in the town where Smith resided. One of them had already met Smith, and it was easy for him to introduce his two friends. The four spent an afternoon together, and Smith noticed that his friends kept referring to a man who was absent, saying that he was a Turf commission agent in a very large way of business. This man, apparently, had several of the leading jockeys under his control, and was

thus able to be in the know as to their intentions or orders at any given meeting.

The story was well told, and Smith swallowed it with avidity. They led him to believe that they knew all there was to be known about racing, and created an excellent impression. Smith eagerly accepted an invitation to dinner that night, to meet the knowledgeable gentleman. Everything went off very well, and the port was excellent. Subsequently, in a private room, over whiskies and sodas, further confidences were exchanged.

Smith referred with pride to a horse he had entered for a race the following day, and the commission agent suggested that it might actually be arranged for the animal to win; for he would be able to manage things with the jockeys by the expenditure of, say, two or three hundred pounds. Moreover, he would disburse this sum himself, if the owner would undertake to make a substantial bet and place it with him. A leading jockey would be engaged to ride the horse, and he would require, in addition to his fee, a wager of £50 on his mount. Smith did not at first consider the idea either sound or sportsmanlike, but he was finally induced by the certainty of the long-awaited win to put £350 on his own horse. He was actually induced to add another £150 on behalf of the con. man who had first suggested the scheme.

So Smith wrote out his cheque for £500, his friends solemnly followed suit, and the three cheques were handed to the commission agent to invest on Smith's horse. A well-known jockey actually did ride the horse, but, as the animal was only half fit and had no possible chance, it ran nowhere. Smith's indignation was only calmed by the jockey declaring that, if the horse had not been interfered with it must have won.

The swindlers were not content with this first haul. It should be explained that the extra £150 put on by Smith had been "advanced" by his first acquaintance among the con. men, and the latter now asked for repayment. Smith explained that this was inconvenient at the moment, as his

balance was low. Thereupon it was suggested that he part with the horse, to settle the debt. Eventually he agreed to do this, with the greatest reluctance. To restore his confidence, the commission agent gave him one or two "tips" on other horses that did win. Smith got quite genial again, and invited one of the gang down to his estates, where he expatiated on his farming and other interests. In the meantime the horse with which he had been parted had been sent to a first-class trainer, who had instructions to get it fit as quickly as possible.

The man who was staying with Smith in his fine old Georgian house in the West Country so ingratiated himself with his host and family that negotiations were actually begun for the trickster to take over part of his estate and assist in the training of his horses, which badly needed attention.

One fine morning a message arrived to the effect that the horse was now in good condition and fit to be entered for a race to be held in a town near Smith's residence; he was therefore invited to attend a trial. At this he was astonished to see his erstwhile horse win easily from a number of good-class animals.

It was then proposed to Smith by the con. men that he should buy the horse back and run it in his own name at the coming meeting. This was done, Smith paying £300. On the day of the race, Smith attended, with his wife and daughters. After a good lunch, he felt in the best of spirits, for his three friends had told him that the horse was a dead certainty, and that they had backed it heavily. It was therefore not a difficult task to persuade Smith to have another £500 on, and he handed a cheque for this amount to the "commission agent".

Of course the horse lost, and the con. men were faced with the task of finding some satisfactory explanation of the disaster. Smith was furious, but they succeeded at last in calming him down by telling him that a great mistake had been made in not allowing him to train the horse himself! Playing on Smith's vanity, they got him to take

the horse back into his own stables. Further, he was induced to pay a large price for a valuable mare, which was also added to the string.

A few weeks later, Smith wrote to one of the con. men, asking him to come down and see the mare in action. In a trial, it easily beat two of Smith's "old crocks". It was therefore entered for a race at a meeting in the Midlands, and Smith backed it with the commission agent for £250. The mare lost. But this was not the worst blow; for it was a selling race, and the mare had been priced at £50. Directly the race was over, an unknown purchaser came forward and claimed it.

The con. men made a great show of indignation, and strongly urged Smith to buy it back at a higher price. But the new owner refused to sell. He was, of course, a man put up to buy the mare by Smith's friends and "turf" advisers.

As I said, in this case the tricksters played their parts so well that Smith never had the least suspicion that he had been swindled.

The tales which I could recount of the wiles of the con. men and of their high percentage of successful coups are legion, but space will not permit of my dealing further here with their activities.

Many of the stories I have recounted expose, I know, an amount of credulity and gullibility on the part of the victims little short of incredible. Yet reputedly hard-headed business men are caught time and again, and will be in the future. The only advice I can give those who may come into 'contact with opulent and benevolent strangers is "Don't expect something for nothing; then you'll never be caught".

And remember to allow for atmosphere and surroundings; these tales, which sound almost fantastic in cold print, are apt to assume a wonderful air of feasibility, even certainty, when told by the silver-tongued gentry who live and have their being in the gilded haunts of the opulent.

CHAPTER XV.

"GOOD-BYE" TO THE YARD, BUT NOT TO "ALL THAT"—HOW THE CONFIDENTIAL ENQUIRY AGENT WORKS—THE "SILENT SERVICE"—SOME EXTRAORDINARY CASES.

AND so the time has come to say good-bye to the Yard, where I spent long and interesting years, sitting at the feet of the masters of detection, and gradually rising to take my own little niche in that service of which it is so truly said that "it always gets its man".

Like many of my colleagues, I found it hard to sever all connection with a profession which, as one rises in its hierarchy, permeates one's very being. I could not bring myself to say a final farewell to a life which, though hard and exacting, has the inestimable compensation of sustained interest, and in which the only thing certain is the occurrence of the unexpected.

Situations constantly arriving which demand a treatment on their own, move and counter-move alternating with breathless rapidity, all the lure of the novel and unknown, the age-long battle of wits between the upholders of the law and the enemies of society—years of this kind of thing hardly tend to cause one to envisage with equanimity a life spent by the fireside, with the vaunted joys of retirement.

My family history, with its long years spent by various members in the service of the police, formed an added reason why my retirement from the official Force should be but the signal for my entry into what may be termed an unofficial branch of the same vocation.

In other words, like many others of my colleagues, I decided to take the plunge and blossom out as a Confidential Enquiry Agent.



"GOOD-BYE" TO THE YARD BUT NOT TO "ALL THAT" - AND NOW, MY DEAR WATSON

In this, as in other professions, there is much spadework to be done before one can come to the fore, with a constant and growing clientèle. It is a profession which, in many ways, makes an even greater demand on the energy and ingenuity of its followers than the rigorous discipline and calculating efficiency of the Yard.

"Private Detectives" and their work do not bulk very largely in the purview of the man in the street. Visions of spectacular recoveries of stolen documents, *always* of course of international importance, of trans-Continental chases after absconding financiers, of dangerous missions to foreign climes in charge of the safety and life of some prominent personage, tortuous trackings of an erring wife or husband—such are some of the vague impressions of the work of the Confidential Enquiry Agent, gleaned from novels or highly-coloured Press reports, held by the ordinary public.

Not that the Confidential Enquiry Agent is not called upon to perform all of these tasks, from time to time, and others equally hazardous and intriguing. The Confidential Enquiry Agent is, for instance, the blackmailer's pet abomination.

They are, however, the high-lights which stand out in relief against the drab monotony of the daily round, a record of hard and unremitting labour; gems of interest sparkling from a subfusc setting, just as in the case of the official Service.

How does the Confidential Enquiry Agent work?

It is close on midnight, and the magnificent foyer of the Grand Babylon Hotel is softly resounding to the gay chatter of half-a-hundred representatives of people prominent in their various walks of life, or remarkable for their riches, beauty or elegance. A cross-section of the top-most facet of the life of the Great Metropolis. Scions of the aristocracy, Cabinet Ministers, film stars, professional beauties, merchant princes, with, of course, a sprinkling of demi-mondaines, gigolos, and the ubiquitous confidence-tricksters.

Apparently nothing more serious is engaging his brain than a mental debate as to whether his "man" shall be given instructions to call him at ten or at eleven o'clock next morning, and whether his tardy and leisurely breakfast shall take the form of kidneys on toast or a devilled bone.

The lights are now being discreetly dimmed, and there is a scraping of chairs and a frou-frou of silk as a general move for home—or for a more nocturnal rendezvous—is started.

The distinguished Frenchman and his lovely companion are making ready to leave; the man-about-town has given no noticeable sign of interest, but, did you know it, his ears are as wide-open as a barn door, and every sense is on the alert.

"*Au revoir, then, chérie,*" the distinguished Frenchman is saying, in a low tone, to his charming friend; "at four o'clock we shall meet—at Croydon; *entendu, n'est-ce pas?*" A blush and a dropping of the eyes are his only answer.

The man-about-town, under cover of his newspaper, is furiously scribbling something on a scrap of paper, which he folds and places in his waistcoat pocket.

The pair are now half-way to the door, and the man-about-town slowly rises and, with a glance at the clock,

follows down the foyer, in a manifest state of incertitude as to his next port of call.

As he emerges from the hotel entrance, he makes a sign to a waiting taxi; at the same moment, a seedy-looking stranger bumps up against him, with a muttered request for alms. With an air of disgust, the man-about-town calls to the commissionaire to move the seedy one on; but a scrap of paper has passed.

The Frenchman and the lady have now entered an opulent-looking limousine and have been driven away, followed by the taxi with the man-about-town.

Under a street-lamp the seedy one unfolds the scrap of paper. "Get through to the Chief at once," it runs, "and ask him to arrange for an air-taxi to be ready at Croydon at four this morning; it must be a fast machine; get him to send X. down there in the car with money; my passport is in order, but I don't know how long I shall be away."

No sooner read than done. "Give me Ambassador double-O double-O. . . . that you, Chief? Z. speaking; yes, Y's tailing them; they're flying over to the Continent at four this morning, and he's following; no, he doesn't know yet where they're going . . . what? No, his passport's all right, but he wants you to arrange for a fast 'plane and send X. down with money; doesn't know how long he is likely to be away."

Meanwhile the limousine has pulled up at a block of expensive flats in Mayfair, which the lady, with a rapid "At four, then" to her companion, enters, the Frenchman being driven on to the Hotel des Empéteurs. After seeing him swallowed by those august portals, our man-about-town is swiftly driven to the suburbs, where he enters an unobtrusive little villa in an unobtrusive fashion.

His wife is asleep, but she wakes as he enters the room. "My bag ready, dear?" "Yes, dear, complete with everything, including passport; where is it this time, Paris or Timbuctoo?"

"Haven't the foggiest," is the somewhat morose reply of the man-about-town, as he swiftly sheds his glad rags and jumps into a comfortable suit of plus-fours. "And I don't know how long I shall be away. Keep the home fires burning and I'll wire you at the first opportunity."

"Well, *I* haven't much money, but *you do* see life," is the resigned comment; "don't bang the door as you go out, and don't go and get a knife stuck in you or anything like that; you do such silly things when I'm not there to look after you, don't you?"

It is only just past three, and dawn has not yet broken when "Y." arrives at Croydon Aerodrome. A shadowy figure moves forward and greets him; it is "Z."

"Everything O.K.?" demands "Y.," "'plane ready and all that?" "O.K., old man," is the reply; "fast machine and a good pilot; just as well, I've found out that their pilot is Blank, so you're in for a chase; here's the 'dough,'" handing him an envelope, "just give me a 'chit' for it."

Half-an-hour passes and then a fast 'plane is wheeled out on to the tarmac. "Keep the other one in the hangar until they actually take off," says "Y.," "but see that she's all tanked up and ready to make a quick getaway."

Four o'clock is striking when the whine of a high-powered car is heard, and the Frenchman drives up. Casting a hasty glance round, he sees merely the small sprinkling of pilots and aerodrome officials who are abroad at any hour of the day or night. In the corner of the bar a couple of bored loungers are drinking hot coffee.

Pacing anxiously up and down, the Frenchman mutters voluble curses on the sex and its disregard for punctuality; has she let him down at the last moment? No, here is another car furiously driving up. Out leaps the lady in her travelling kit. Into the 'plane and, a couple of minutes later, the machine has taken off in the first watery rays of the rising sun.

Barely has she made her preliminary circle of the aerodrome, than the pursuing machine is run out of its hangar,

the man-about-town clambers aboard, and with a parting shout from "Z." of "Don't forget to get on the 'phone at the first opportunity; give my regards to Harry, if it's Paris," they are off.

Soon they are over the Channel, with the first machine only a couple of miles ahead; its course shows that the first destination, at any rate, is Paris. Keeping as near as they dare, owing to the slight haze which impairs visibility, "Y." and his pilot follow on the fugitives' tail.

Here is Le Bourget, and there is the first machine landing. Five minutes later, "Y.'s" pilot comes down, too; a few cars are to be seen, waiting for early arrivals, but none of them makes a move. "Now I wonder where they *are* going," ruminates "Y.", strolling off to the Customs shed "it's beyond Paris, anyway."

In the Customs shed are the pair; the formalities are soon over, and they go into the buffet. "Y." and his pilot hang about outside, until the preparations on the other machine warn them that their birds are about to take flight again; a hurried inspection of their 'plane, an extra ration of petrol, and they are ready to follow.

On with the chase; Lyon is left behind; hullo, coming down at Toulouse, are they? What's that? The Morocco-bound Latecoère, waiting there? So that's the game. Sending the pilot off to book a passage, "Y." scribbles another hurried note for him to take back to London; a quarter of an hour later, and he is ensconced in the Latecoère machine, a few seats behind the absconding pair.

Well, they can't reach Morocco that night; where are they coming down? Barcelona; well, that's not too bad, thinks "Y." "Wonder if they're going to hit it up to-night, or whether bed's the order of the day."

At the Barcelona aerodrome, the Ritz bus is waiting; in climb the pair; "Y." follows in a taxi, entering the hotel a few minutes later.

"A single room, Señor; certainly; will you kindly sign the register?" murmurs the obsequious receptionist. "You

don't know," says "Y.," "whether my friend, Courtenay de Vere, has arrived, do you?" "No, Señor, I think not; there, just above your name, are the arrivals for to-day, only five of them; perhaps the Señor will be arriving by the Madrid train." "Perhaps," says "Y.," scanning the list:

Herr Otto Baumzweig, Grosshandler, Berlin.

Miss Selina Hoggenheimer, Detroit, U.S.A.

George Jenkins, Wolverhampton, England.

De la Jardinière, industriel, et Madame, Paris.

"Where are you putting me?" asks "Y." "I don't want to be too high up; have you got anything decent on the first floor?" "But certainly, Señor, we have some magnificent apartments *au premier*; why, the French millionaire and Madame have chosen that floor." "Oh, well, if it's good enough for them, it ought to be all right for me; give me something like they've got."

"No. 17, with bath, in the same corridor, is free, Señor."

"O.K.," says "Y.," "send my suitcase up." "The Señor will perhaps be making a stay," continues the clerk, "our town merits, I think I may say . . ." "Don't know," "Y." cuts him short, "tell you in the morning," and a note changes hands.

About time for a bite in the grill-room, thinks "Y."; no signs of the fugitives. A little later, he strolls up to his room and notices, outside the door of No 26, a pair of patent-leather boots and two dainty crocodile-skin shoes.

"So that's that," he says to himself; "I think we might go and see whether there's anything doing on the Rambla . . ."

Now, the Latecoère leaves early, so "Y." is soon astir next morning; a little conversation with the chambermaid, and another note changes hands. "*Mais oui, Monsieur,*" exclaims the shrewd Frenchwoman, "*je comprends parfaitement bien ; je vous porterai cela tout à l'heure.*"

When the Latecoère wings its way southward, "Y."

has in his possession two little documents, one signed by the chambermaid, the other a copy of certain entries in the hotel register. His mission is nearly accomplished. It remains but to see the fugitives safely ensconced in whatever *nid d'amour* has been chosen in mysterious Morocco.

There is no space to tell you how he traced them to a cosy little cottage set on the gorgeous slopes of "The Mountain" at Tangier, or of the further enquiries he made there.

Less than a week saw him back in London, with a voluminous report—and a heavy expense-sheet. "H'm," said his chief, his face falling somewhat as he saw the latter, "bit heavy, what? Ah, well, you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs and you've certainly got the evidence. Better run along home now; daresay you could do with a rest. 'Phone up some time to-morrow, though; there's that Warsaw job in the offing."

The sequel came, some weeks later, with screaming headlines in the evening papers; another *cause célèbre* was born. "Well, well," said the man-about-town, as he bought a paper, "I really don't know what Society is coming to."

That is a high-light, representing the dénouement of weeks and weeks of weary watching by "Y." and his colleagues, endless conferences between myself and solicitors, the expenditure of an enormous amount of time, money and patience.

Such a "coup" may be completely ruined, at its very inception, or on the verge of success, by one incautious move on the part of an agent; then all the time, trouble and expense has gone for naught. Small wonder that only the most tried and experienced men can be employed on this class of work; men who must be prepared to assume, at a minute's notice, almost any rôle, and to repair, with equally short warning, by the speediest route to almost any corner of the globe.

It is a profession for specialists, in which there can be no excuses, no refusals.

Nor are the rôles usually to be played by my agents anything like as pleasant as that assumed on this occasion by "Y."

Humping shoulders of beef in Smithfield Market, combing the purlieus of China Town on the track of notorious desperadoes, car-chases across England and the Continent, monotonous standing guard over valuables, safe-conduct of important documents to their destination amid a welter of snares, long weeks spent by my lady assistants as "cook-generals" or "companions", tortuous commercial investigations necessitating a profound knowledge of accountancy and banking, hours spent in wading through a mass of correspondence in any language from French to Chinese, the detailing of escorts for bullion and valuables—these and a hundred other delicate and difficult tasks, often dangerous, enter into the daily round of the Confidential Enquiry Agent.

Whenever you read, in your daily paper, of some *cause célèbre*, some startling scandal, piquant revelations consequent on some commercial crash—in fact, the greater part of the fodder on which the thundering presses batten—you may be sure that I, or some of my colleagues, have been at work. But you will not see us at work, even after the indication I have given you of our methods, unless you get up *very* early in the morning. For our successes we can claim no open credit; the last thing we can afford to do is to call attention to ourselves; but they also serve who only stand and wait—at draughty street-corners in the pelting rain or driving snow; or who ride the wings of the storm in a mad air dash over half-a-dozen countries.

It is only the growing list of names in my case book which tells me that I am delivering the goods.

You will guess that, since I left the Yard, I have not altogether severed connection with my old friends, the *con-men*. In fact, in my present capacity as Principal of my Confidential Enquiry Bureau, I have frequently run across old "clients" on my periodical business trips to the Continent.

Some time ago I was on a very confidential mission which took me to the Bohemian quarters of Paris. The people whom I was watching kept to their hotel by day and only ventured out at night. Early one morning, in one of the leading *boites de nuit*, I was listening to the strains of a Russian orchestra, when my attention was called to three Americans sitting at a nearby table. They were talking rather loudly and I could not help overhearing some of their conversation. I learnt from the proprietor that they had been frequenting his restaurant for nearly a fortnight and were very good customers. "Rich Americans, Monsieur," he said complacently, "very rich."

That night the corks kept popping until well on into the following morning. Two days later I happened to change my hotel and, of all coincidences, who should happen to be stopping in the new one but the same rich Americans whom I had seen in the café. I was curious enough to examine the hotel register and, after making a few discreet enquiries, I discovered that the three Americans worked in their rooms all day long. It was not very long before I was able to establish the fact that they were a bunch of share-pushing crooks who were making ready for a descent on London.

Naturally, loyalty to my old profession and my own duty as a citizen led me, on my return to London, to make a call at the Yard, where I gave the whole story. It is unnecessary to add that London was not troubled with that particular bunch of "rich Americans".

Some months after the happening I have related, I was in Berlin, and I noticed, after dinner that night, a party of four American con. men sitting in the lounge, taking their coffee and smoking opulent-looking cigars. They did not notice me that night. Next morning I happened to see one of them "trying out" a visitor to the hotel, claiming acquaintance with him and generally putting the preliminary stuff over. Just then the con. man did see me, and recognised me; he and his colleagues folded up their tents and stole silently away.

Only a week or so later, in Carlsbad, I was taking my coffee in the gardens of the Grand Hotel Puppe, when I noticed two of this same gang of con. men pass by. After one disgusted glance, I heard one say to the other, "Damn it, he's *here now*".

Next day I was leaving for Prague, and I did not see them before my departure. I should have liked to have had the chance of listening to their conversation, and I think that, all unwittingly, I must have done one or more prospective "pigeons" a good turn.

Of course, as you will have imagined, all sorts of ruses have to be employed, in their turn and according to circumstances, if I am to supply my clients with the required information.

On one occasion, in a very delicate commercial investigation, in which the element of blackmail was present, I had to fix up a microphone, or listening-set, which was left in position for three or four days, with the result that a complete record of the necessary conversations was available for the Court.

It was not long after this that my services were again enlisted in a case of a similar nature, in which a man who had been a director of a certain company was trying to molest his former colleagues and obtain sums of money from them; he had, in fact, embarked on a regular campaign of blackmail.

Not satisfied with the purchase from him of his holding in another company, at five times its original value, this man started to intimidate the directors in various ways, threatening, among other things, to give away valuable business information to their customers.

Unfortunately, owing to the need for instant action, it was not possible to instal the apparatus I had used in the other case. An appointment was made by the directors with the blackmailer, at their offices, in order "finally to dispose of the matters under discussion", and it became necessary for me to find some hiding-place in which an accomplice could be lodged for the duration of the interview.

I noticed a large steel cupboard in one of the rooms, and had this brought into the room in which the interview was to take place. Holes were bored, to give air, and a light was fixed up inside, which, it was ascertained, would not be visible when the lights in the room itself were on.

Then I had to persuade a girl stenographer to take up her position in the cupboard and "listen-in", taking a note of the conversation. I explained to her that her stay in the cupboard would almost certainly not exceed half-an-hour.

These preparations having been made, and the girl having taken up her post in the cupboard, I repaired to the leads on the roof, where I had to keep watch; a piece of glass had been removed from a window, in order to facilitate my hearing. It was bitterly cold and snowing heavily.

The blackmailer arrived and was shown into the office. The conversation started, and went on for half-an-hour, an hour, an hour-and-a-half; what is happening, I thought, to the poor girl in the cupboard? Has she fainted? And how are we to release her? After trying to think of some means of communicating with the directors, in order to call their attention to her plight, and induce them to cut the conversation short, I was finally able to get a message through via the house telephone exchange, which arranged for a little disc to drop over the directors' telephone. They then spotted what was the matter, and made an excuse for terminating the conversation, which was to be resumed a day or two later.

The girl was released from her prison, and I was much relieved to find that she was still alive, and indeed smiling although she had been for over two hours in her uncomfortable surroundings.

At the further interview fixed at the company's offices a couple of days later, it fortunately proved unnecessary to keep her so long in durance vile, for it was not long before all the necessary evidence was secured.

The world is a small place, as I was reminded not long ago, when engaged on a confidential mission to Montreux, in

Switzerland. I was sitting at dinner in my hotel, when I noticed one of the waiters, not the one attending to my table, eyeing me from time to time.

Finally he came up to me and said, "You are Mr. Leach, are you not? Do you remember me? I wanted to thank you for all you did for my sister. She is ever so happy now, and getting on so well with her husband, who is kindness itself."

I soon recalled the case, on which I had been engaged in London some months before. By the exercise of a little tact and diplomacy, I had been instrumental in re-uniting a couple who were drifting apart, and saving a home. It was one of my cases with a "happy ending", and these are more numerous than might be expected, for the confidential enquiry agent, like the family doctor, is the recipient of many secrets and can often bring considerable influence to bear at the moment when it is most needed.

A very delicate investigation on which I was employed concerned an intended marriage between two members of well-known families. The father of the bride-to-be sent for me and, in the presence of his family solicitor, informed me that some very disagreeable rumours had come anonymously to his ears concerning the personal habits of the prospective bridegroom. I was charged with the task of making a rigorous enquiry into the young man's character and mode of life. These investigations were to be carried out with the utmost speed and secrecy.

For upwards of a fortnight my agents kept continual observation on the young man, by day and by night; in fact, he was under constant surveillance the whole time.

The result of this observation was to lay bare a state of affairs at which I can do no more than vaguely hint. Suffice it to say that his flat was the scene of nightly orgies of the most lurid description, and that there was abundant evidence that the young man was a sexual pervert. Statements incriminating him were obtained from youths, and

the report which I was forced to place before the father of his intended bride and the family solicitor had the inevitable sequel that Society was once more thrilled and intrigued by one of those laconic communiqués ending “. . . will not take place.”

In connection with this case, it is of interest to set down one of the most remarkable coincidences which has come to my notice during a career which has naturally been studded with the unexpected and the bizarre.

My agents, who were shadowing the young man in question, followed him into a cinema in the Strand, where a film was being shown, of which the case they were investigating was the living counterpart.

My men were sitting directly behind the young man, and, there in front of them on the screen, were being enacted the various phases of a drama, tragedy, comedy—call it what you will—which it was their duty to follow, stage by stage, in the living flesh!

The young man laughed heartily at the various situations unrolled by the film, little dreaming that Nemesis was sitting with him in the stalls.

My men were, needless to say, highly diverted, wondering whether, if they communicated with the author of the film, congratulating him on his admirably-produced counterfeit of real life, they would be faced with an action for infringement of copyright.

Truth, we are told, is stranger than fiction; indeed, particularly in my profession, it generally is; but, on this occasion, the two ran a dead-heat.

The coincidence was heightened by the fact that the social position of the actors in the film and of the protagonists in the real-life drama was identical.

Not all of my hunts have terminated in the speedy tracking-down of the quarry. Once, my agents and I had to give chase to an erring couple who had taken flight in a powerful auxiliary schooner, which I was, thanks to the courtesy of a well-known nobleman, able to pursue in his

own vessel. Alas, just as we got abreast the North Foreland, our engine conked out, and there we were, rolling in the trough of a nasty cross-sea, helpless, with the additional annoyance of seeing our quarry calmly disappear over the horizon. The nobleman, who was a very clever mechanic, finally induced the recalcitrant engine to splutter into life again, but it was too late. The chase was over for that day.

A big catering firm in the City had for some time noticed leakages of stock and suspected systematic thieving from their stores and other buildings, carried out by members of their staff.

One of the agents I introduced into the staff, in the guise of an ordinary meat porter, was soon able to establish the fact that extensive petty thieving was in progress, and his suspicions fell on the assistant stores-manager, a trusted employee who had been with the firm for many years.

He employed a clever ruse to accomplish his downfall; noticing that the assistant manager was leaving the stores one day with a pocket full of stolen eggs, my man obtained two or three eggs himself, and followed the suspect; when the latter drew abreast of a group of other employees, my agent drew an egg from his pocket and threw it at the suspect, hitting him full in the face; the latter, thoroughly enraged at this, retaliated with the eggs in his own pocket and soon both combatants were liberally bespattered with yolk, white and shells. In this way, the fact was duly established, in the presence of several witnesses, that the assistant manager had stolen eggs in his possession.

A week later, I caught the manager himself red-handed, leaving the stores with a quantity of stolen goods, which he was carrying in parcels and in his pockets.

The agent in question was very clever at "inside" jobs. He would assume, at a minute's notice, the rôle of butcher, meat porter, despatch clerk and so on.

It was only a couple of weeks after the incident I have just narrated when his ingenuity was put to a further test.

A manufacturing firm, whose name is a household word, was seriously alarmed by shortages in their stock; they consulted me as to the best method of ascertaining whether members of their staff were in any way responsible for this state of affairs.

I at once advised the directors that the best method to adopt was to put one of my men to work in the dispatch department, as a first test. How well I hit the nail on the head can best be judged by what happened subsequently.

Within a week I had definite evidence of petty pilfering, but advised the directors not to act hastily, because I suspected that the evil was deep-rooted. Fortunately, they fell in with my views, because, a few weeks later, my agent had so well established himself in the confidence of certain of his fellow-workers that we were able to obtain evidence of a widespread conspiracy that existed in different departments, very clever and ingenious plans having been worked out by which the firm was being robbed each week of stock of very considerable value. As a matter of fact, one of the culprits was actually private chauffeur to one of the directors!

When my plans were ripe, we acted swiftly, and were rewarded by a haul of captives which ran into double figures.

Not so long since, I was called in to investigate a leakage of stable secrets from a well-known racing establishment. It was suspected that jockeys and stable-boys were in the habit of passing on information of the most delicate and confidential nature to the inhabitants of the village near which the stables were situated.

Therefore, while I was up at the training establishment, putting jockeys, stable-lads and others through a searching cross-examination, one of my agents took up his quarters in the village, passing as a traveller in whisky.

Over a convivial "pint" in the village inn, he would get into conversation, both with the villagers and with the personnel of the training establishment, and was often the

recipient of the confidences of both these groups; and, needless to say, he joined heartily in the chorus of "grousing" which the head of the training establishment had aroused by his action in calling in "one of them there . . . detectives". Perhaps he evinced a certain satisfaction in getting an opportunity of "telling his own old man off!" At any rate, he made such good use of it that he was never for one moment suspected, and was consequently able to hand in an affidavit which helped our case considerably.

Now, I want to tell you of a very special case. . . . Just excuse me one moment, there's the telephone going. . . . "Hullo, yes, Leach speaking. . . . Who? Oh, Berlin . . . yes, yes . . . what's that? . . . The big bank-fraud again? . . . Yes, I'd been rather expecting it . . . what time is it now? Half-past four . . . Yes, I can manage the Harwich boat to-night . . . Oh, my bag's always packed . . . well, I'll 'phone you through again at half-past seven, in case anything startling may transpire in the meantime. . . . See you in any case to-morrow at the Adlon. . . . Who? . . . Oh, yes, I'll just have time to get a statement from him before I start. . . . What's the weather report to-night? . . . B-r-r-r . . . well, can't be helped . . . must ring off now . . . up to the eyes in it here."

Now then, where was I? Oh, yes, I was going to tell you about a big jewel theft, on the investigation of which I was engaged, and my successful recovery of the jewels. I well remember crossing the Channel during one of the worst gales ever known of recent years, with the jewels in my possession. I hope it won't be so rough to-night. . . .

But that reminds me, I really must be making my preparations, so I am afraid the full tale of the jewel theft will have to join the many other stories of my experiences which I have promised myself the pleasure of writing just as soon as ever I can get a moment. . . .

Now *Auf Wiedersehen*; for I really must be off "*nach Berlin*" and possibly another "Great Adventure!"

